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VOL. III.

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STUDIES IN TEXTS;  
FOR  
FAMILY, CHURCH, AND SCHOOL.

BY  
JOSEPH PARKER, D.D.,  
*Minister of the City Temple, London.*

*IN SIX VOLUMES.*

VOL. III.

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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE talks on Homiletics are given direct from the shorthand writer's notes. I think it better to preserve their freeness than to cramp them into literary form. My hope is that their very miscellaneousness may attract attention at many incidental but important points. These talks to ministerial students are the outcome of a long personal pulpit experience.

THE CITY TEMPLE,

*March 1899.*



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# STUDIES IN TEXTS.

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## THE INSTITUTE OF HOMILETICS.

IT is my growing conviction that there is no work equal, in range, pathos, and grandeur, to the work of preaching the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. I have recently taken the trouble of going once more to scenes made famous by the eloquence of many orators, and my impression has been deepened that the pulpit, if faithful to its vocation and opportunities, has nothing to fear from any rivalry. The senator and lawyer have undoubtedly some advantages in the immediate excitement occasioned by their subjects ; but for substance, solemnity, and far-reaching influence and result, their work is the merest trifling when compared with the ministry of Jesus Christ's truth. Under this impression I have anxiously considered whether I could make any practical contribution to the cause of the Christian pulpit, and the answer has happily been dictated by events. It has been my honour to receive invitations to visit several colleges, and converse with the students respecting their prospective work as preachers and pastors. Inability to accept such invitations has occasioned me considerable uneasiness. It occurred to me, however, that if students could arrange to come occasionally to some central place, some good might come of frank intercourse upon ministerial and pastoral prepara-

tion and service. Acting upon this suggestion, students of various denominational colleges were invited to attend at the Poultry Chapel on Thursday morning, May 25th, 1871, to make arrangements for periodical conversation. There were present students from New College, Hackney, Regent's Park, and the Presbyterian College, Guilford Street : there were present also members of the Church of England and the Primitive Methodist Connexion. It was resolved to meet at the Poultry on the Monday after the first Sunday of each month, at two o'clock in the afternoon.

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#### PRELIMINARY WATCHWORDS.

KNOWLEDGE is so fundamental to the work and calling of a minister that he cannot be one without it: "Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me" (Hosea iv. 6). The want of knowledge in a minister is such a defect as cannot be supplied by anything else ; be he never so meek, patient, bountiful, unblamable, if he hath not skill to divide the word aright he is not cut out for a minister. Everything is good as it is good for the end it is appointed to : a knife, though it hath a haft of diamonds, yet if it will not cut 'tis no knife ; a bell, if not sound, is no bell. The great work of a minister is to teach others, his lips are to preserve knowledge ; he should be as conversant in the things of God as others in their particular trades. Ministers are called lights ; if the light, then, be darkness, how great is the darkness of that people like to be ? I know these stars in Christ's hands are not all of the same magnitude ; there is a greater glory of gift and graces shines in some than others ; yet so much light is necessary to every minister as was in the star the wise men saw at Christ's birth, to

be able out of the word to direct sinners the safe and true way to Christ and Salvation. O sirs, it is a sad way of getting a living by killing of men, as some unskilful physicians do ; but much more to get a temporal livelihood by ruining souls through our ignorance. He is a cruel man to the poor passengers who will undertake to be pilot when he never so much as learnt his compass.—*Gurnall, 1617-1679.*

Take heed to yourselves, lest you should be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others, and be strangers to the effectual workings of that gospel which you preach ; and lest while you proclaim the necessity of a Saviour to the world, your own hearts should neglect him and you should miss of an interest in him and his saving benefits ! Take heed to yourselves, lest you perish while you call upon others to take heed of perishing, and lest you famish yourselves while you prepare their food ! Though there be a promise of shining as the stars to those that turn many to righteousness (Dan. xii. 3), that is but on supposition that they be first turned to it themselves : such promises are meant, *ceteris paribus, et suppositis supponendis.* Their own sincerity in the faith is the condition of their glory simply considered, though their great ministerial labours may be a condition of the promise of their greater glory : many a man hath warned others that they come not to that place of torment, which yet they hasted to themselves : many a preacher is now in hell that hath an hundred times called upon his hearers to use the utmost care and diligence to escape it. Can any reasonable man imagine that God should save men for offering salvation to others, while they refused it themselves ; and for telling others those truths which they themselves neglected and abused ? Many a tailor goes in rags that maketh costly clothes for others ; and many a cook scarcely licks his

fingers, when he hath dressed for others the most costly dishes. Believe it, brethren, God never saved any man for being a preacher, nor because he was an able preacher ; but because he was a justified, sanctified man, and consequently faithful in his Master's work.—*Baxter, 1615-1691.*

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*On Monday, June 5th, 1871, the first meeting was held. After a frank criticism, the President summed up as follows :—*

We have had three outlines before us. With regard to the outline based upon a text in Solomon's Song, let me at once say that it impresses me rather as fanciful than substantial and useful. Wonder was excited as to how so uncommon a subject would be treated ; and the wonder was not satisfied by the treatment. The preacher therefore put himself at a great disadvantage by beginning at the wrong end : wonder or excitement of any kind should always, if possible, be reserved for the end. When expectation is excited, and not fully satisfied, a good deal of influence is lost. If in exciting expectation you are conscious of having resources that will abundantly satisfy it, then you are right, because you arrest attention at the very beginning. The outline afforded opportunity of bringing out many useful commonplaces respecting Jesus Christ and Christianity. I do not object to commonplaces. It has been urged against one outline to-day that a great many commonplaces were introduced in its divisions. Let us clearly understand that eighteen centuries of Christian teaching have been greatly misspent, if there be not to-day in the Church hundreds of commonplaces that are worthy of repetition. We have been accumulating these things : they are part of the treasury of the Church. They are

not commonplaces, therefore, in any sense that deserves contemptuous reference : they are commonplaces as current coin of the realm may be commonplace. They are established in their values ; they are recognised truths in the Church ; and I would not care for a discourse that did not abound in the commonplaces of Christian truth—something that all men can lay hold of. What we object to is not the commonplaces, but the commonplace method of putting them. We must have the commonplaces, the recognised truths, the old lines and bases of Christian theology and thinking ; but every man should do his own minting in a special and peculiar manner, that shall give to commonplace truths the advantage of a new setting and a new aspect. I question the advisableness of referring to the testimony of infidels regarding the example of Jesus Christ : that has been done to-day. As a general rule I would ignore all infidels when I am in the pulpit. We may have to encounter them in class-work, in visitation, in lecturing ; but we need not in a public Christian audience give prominence to any infidel teaching, even by quoting it, except under peculiar circumstances. Never refer to an infidel objection unless you are sure that you can thrice slay it, not merely knock it down and kick it out, but utterly destroy and annihilate it ; for this reason : there are many persons of undisciplined mind and incomplete judgment who will remember the objection when they have forgotten the answer. Why should we be the mouthpieces of infidelity ? Why should we let infidelity have the opportunity of making itself heard through Christian lips and in a Christian congregation ? Except, therefore, under very peculiar circumstances, ignore in your ministrations all infidel teaching. At the same time, I leave margin enough for men to exercise their gifts in peculiar crises of congregational history, or the theological thinking of the

times. I am simply laying down the doctrine generally, and leaving ample scope for special instances.

I question whether the gentlemen who gave the first two outlines were right in dwelling so much upon the mere matter of translation. The less we say about translation in the pulpit the better. Here again there may arise questions that can only be settled by technical, critical exegesis ; but I question whether we are, as a rule, in our ministry to dwell upon these points.

I question whether some of the illustrations were such as would be altogether accepted by congregations. For example, "The wife valued her husband more than she valued her husband's possessions." There has been a case in the newspapers within the last few hours which shows sometimes that women do look at mere possessions. It is an unfortunate allusion, simply because, though it is substantially true, it affords people an opportunity of running off and saying that if all his reasoning be like that illustration, there is not much in it. An unwise conclusion on their part, undoubtedly ; but you cannot teach congregations wisdom. There is nothing so foolish and unmanageable as a crowd of people.

The outline we had upon the verse in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, the 5th chapter, struck me in this way : The preacher has no idea what he is about,—he is utterly lost. Now, if it struck me in that way, it would probably strike ninety-nine men out of every hundred in an ordinary congregation much in the same way. I am here listening anxiously, looking out for features to approve and commend ; listening with a desire to understand the speaker, and appreciate his speech ; and if with these advantages I have come to the conclusion that the

preacher treated his subject in the vaguest possible manner, I cannot but infer that the congregations which we usually address would be very much of the same opinion. The speaker was labouring with his text: he seemed to have no mastery over it, no calm control. He treated the text as if the text were very anxious to elude and baffle him, and make a fool of him generally. Now, the text is as kind and inoffensive a text as you will find in the whole Book. Why not preach it in a sympathetic and appreciative spirit? You say, "I do so." Very likely: but the impression left upon our minds was the contrary; and no preacher can afford to be independent of his hearers.

With regard to exegesis, on which the speaker spent so much labour, there is no doubt that it is of infinite importance to get at the right meaning of the Apostle's words, and the words of all other inspired writers. That is the fundamental point: get to know what your text really and truly means. But there is a way of making difficulties and exaggerating them. If you dwell only on the difficulty of your text, the probability is that the whole discourse will practically be a failure. I think that the difficulties of any text with which we have to deal are fewer than its simple suggestions and direct truths. But here is a preacher who undertakes mainly, if not exclusively, to grapple with difficulties. Had he laid down a central line, worked steadily along that line, and looked at the difficulties incidentally as he proceeded from point to point, he would then have set the difficulties in a right relation; they would have been subordinate, and not predominant. But the effect upon my mind, produced by the outline in question, was this: That this gospel, especially the central truths of this gospel, is

associated with such metaphysical difficulties and critical perplexities that it cannot be a message of God to the heart of man. Now, it is not altogether what did we mean? what did we intend? what was present to our mind? This is the point: How does it affect the congregation? The preacher is not to be satisfied with his own scheme. He is a teacher; and it is the duty of a teacher to descend to his pupils, and to conduct them from their line of observation to his own plane.

"Shall Christ come out of Galilee?" is a text that excited my interest. The impression produced upon my mind by the outline was this: It is most cleverly done. I do not mean that altogether as a compliment. I liked the outline; the only difficulty about it was this: Am I not more struck with the cleverness of the artist than with the earnestness of the preacher? It is open to that objection. At the same time, I think he would be a blind critic who did not see in that outline extreme readiness to seize upon points, and to put them in a very clear light. I did not see arrogance or assumption in the speaker's manner. I thought his manner becoming, and saw nothing in it that struck me in any other way than that it was simple and impressive.

I do not hear so quickly as some men hear; but I thought I heard in some of the criticisms such pronunciations as the following: Somebody spoke of a very "analectic mind." It may be want of sharpness in hearing. The word as I read it is analytic. Did somebody talk about the devisions of sermons? Ought it to be pronounced so? I certainly heard one speaker refer to the first 'ED—the first 'ED of the discourse. What is that? It may be a contraction, for the purpose of saving time.

With regard to texts generally, we may ask such

questions as these : Are they complete in themselves ? Does my text express a complete truth ? In the first place, would not this text be better expounded as part of a paragraph, instead of dealing with it individually in its isolation ? would it not be better dealt with as part of a whole paragraph ? Sometimes we think not ; sometimes this temptation seizes us : I can give some clever heads upon that ; I can treat that in a very striking manner. So you may be able to do. But the thing we have to do is to save them that hear us : that is the first consideration in the treatment of every text. The next question I put regarding a text is this : Is it in its isolation worth discussing ? Some clever things can be said upon it ; wonder can be excited about this ; but in the sight of God, and in the prospect of eternity, is it worth discussing ? Texts have their special adaptations ; they have their adaptations, for example, to the age of the preacher. If a young man, three or four and twenty years of age, should take one of the most difficult passages in the apostolic writings, one would say that he had better take something simpler. It is a great text ; but are you the man to treat it ? Had you not better reserve that text for ten years or a quarter of a century ? We do not say a word against the text : it is a sublime, glorious text ; but whether, at your time of life, you are the right man to treat it is a question which should be seriously looked at. Texts are adapted to the necessities of the times. It is a time of panic in the city ; then a young man might be justified in taking a subject which under ordinary circumstances he would not think of discussing. We are to remember, too, the mingled character of our congregations. If they were all men of equal education, we could deal with them in one way. If they had been spending a week of leisure, poring over books, and preparing for

our meeting them on the Sabbath morning, we might preach in a certain style. But nine-tenths of them have just run out of the shop, thrown off their aprons, and come in and said, Now, what is it? You cannot talk to those men as philosophers. Our difficulty is to maintain the high tone of our teaching as a revelation from God, yet to express ourselves in the homely, telling language that the world can understand. We feel that, having all this truth of God to tell, and this great heart of his to reveal, we ought to work from the point of our own spiritual training. We have been intensely hard at work all the week in the study, thinking and praying ; we have been visiting the sick, helping men out of difficulties, and we are on the Sabbath morning, as we have been during the week, on some very high spiritual eminence, forgetful that the men before us may be miles away below our standard. That is the difficulty.

In choosing texts ask, Are they complete in themselves? Could they not be better expounded as parts of a paragraph? Are they in their isolation worth discussing? Then, when the outline is marked out, ask three things: Does it come naturally out of the text? Not, Is it clever? but, Does it belong to this text? Not, Is it true? but, Does it belong to this text? Not, Is it brilliant, or poetical, or even useful? but, Does it belong to this text? Develop each text according to its own kind. Ask again, Does this outline set forth all the main truths of the text? Observe main truths. We cannot say all that may be said upon a text. When you lay down a great outline a hearer may say, "You might have said a great deal more upon the text." True, but what you said was substantial and complete.

Again, Is the structure symmetrical? How do the

parts stand in their relation to one another? Is this sermon a brickfield, or is it a building? There are men who bring into the pulpit millions of bricks, and build nothing. They tumble them down, load upon load, on the church floor, and say, "There they are." But they are no use. You want architecture, you want arrangement, you want shape, you want light, you want ventilation! These are questions we may apply to all outlines. Does the sermon come naturally out of the text? Is it symmetrical? Does it develop itself into natural order, and shape itself into something that is really useful?

The preacher must consider the congregation as well as himself. Above all things, let the tone be right, so that the one impression made upon all minds will be, "This man means what he says."

The outline which is before us is upon the text, "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." I was struck with the shapelessness and pointlessness of a few of the sentences. There was, too, considerable repetition; not the repetition of an idea in various forms, which is perfectly legitimate, but the repetition of mere words which did not tend to clear the meaning of the speaker. The first sentence, for example, was to this effect: "You may search this book through and through, from one end to another";—how otherwise could you search a book through and through? We ought to express ourselves in as few words as will distinctly convey our meaning. Put down a sentence, and examine it as you would examine a telegram for the purpose of seeing how many words you can strike out without injuring the message. If we had to pay for our words, we should use fewer of them. The kind of sentence which I have indicated is poor; sometimes words can be piled upon each

other so as to create an impressive effect? but in the sentence before us, multiplication is enfeeblement. This is apparently a trifling point; but as I have often taken occasion to insist, so now I may repeat, there is nothing trifling which relates to the maturity and power of our discourses. The speaker was, if anything, a little too fanciful in some of his expressions. For example, he spoke of the Son of man "coming down from his radiant throne on high." The expression is hardly allowable. It is a kind of phraseology which may be excused in a very young student, provided he do not use it more than one month; were he to carry it into the fifth week of his ministry, he would betray incurable mental weakness. Far be it from me to disparage efflorescence in a young man's speech. It is allowable that young men should have a liking for young things; many a youth who has begun his ministry with "crystal battlements," "pearly gates," "sapphire thrones," and "circumambient beauties" has settled down into a measure of common sense which was hardly to be expected from his juvenile insanity.

I regretted to find in the manner of the speaker a tone which led me to suppose that he was merely reciting a lesson which he imperfectly remembered. There was a great deal said with the lips, but the emphasis of an earnest heart appeared to be wanting. Observe, I only say that such earnestness appeared to be wanting; for the speaker was undoubtedly sincere in the utterance of every sentence. It is always a pity, however, when we have to give credit to a preacher for earnestness, instead of being borne away by his fervour and vehemence, by which I do not mean mere loudness or clamour, for earnestness is often quietly and solemnly intense. A man is not necessarily earnest because he can shout so as to be heard a mile off; nor

is he necessarily earnest because he indulges in "bodily exercise" which is likely to afflict him with the disease of "Mondayishness." I should have liked more simplicity and directness in the manner of the speaker, more naturalness and ease, so as to have given us the impression that he was talking to us and not before us. Such simplicity will come with extended practice; from the very beginning, however, it ought to be steadily aimed at, so as to escape the very appearance of merely performing something.

The gravest charge which I have to bring against the outline relates to the speaker's treatment of the doctrine of the text. He was not sufficiently full and explicit in his exposition of the principal words; namely, "save" and "lost. He spoke of men being lost through "pride," through "selfishness," and of their being "lost to society"; all this is entirely beside the mark when put forth as an exposition in chief. The gravity and solemnity of the word "lost" seemed to escape the speaker's attention. Man is lost in heart—lost before God—there has been a tremendous disruption in his moral nature. And as to the salvation which Jesus Christ came to work out, it was not a merely social salvation, an attempt to set Zacchæus on a proper social pedestal: the object of Jesus Christ was to redeem and save the soul. We must be careful to deal justly with the principal words of a text. A great deal of incidental matter may be brought in usefully in very many instances; but if the main idea be superficially treated, the wisest of our hearers will distrust our criticism, and turn a deaf ear to our exhortation.

I was pleased to hear a tender tone now and again in the voice of the speaker. Tenderness infinitely

becomes such a theme. I am increasingly persuaded that tenderness is one of the main elements of ministerial power. We must have more than mere literal exactness, more than merely correct theology, more than a logical statement and defence of our positions ; we must have heart. In speaking about salvation, we should speak with the thankfulness and fervour of saved men. Not by rough exhortation can we bring men to accept Christ ; we must meet our hearers as men who are conscious that we ourselves have realised the sufficiency and infinite comfort of the grace of God.

These remarks, made with candour so extreme, will be understood by you all, and by our brother in particular. My own preaching exposes itself to criticism much more severe ; what we have to do is to consider how far we can advantageously avail ourselves of the criticisms with which our friends and our enemies alike favour us. The preacher may be right, and the critic wrong. He is a poor tool who cannot find fault with a sermon.

An expression in the opening prayer commended itself most strongly to my judgment. We acknowledged that God alone truly calls men to the ministry of his Son. Our ministry is indeed a vocation. We are not to take it up as a trade or profession, or as a mere occupation ; we are to preach because God has laid upon our souls his own holy claim. Our work will become a delight to us in proportion as we realise ourselves as the chosen and ordained servants of God. If we are losing our sense of divine call, let us instantly and severely examine the reasons for that loss. If we find that we have been misled by a transient impulse, let us, whatever sacrifice it may involve, turn away from the ministry. On the other hand, if the loss be occasioned by anything that can be modified

or removed, our duty as Christian men is plain and imperative. I have made it my business in life to discourage candidates for the ministry until I have been fully persuaded that the impulse under which they were acting was the work of the Holy Ghost. To many an applicant for admission into colleges I have said, "You will think me severe to-day, wanting perhaps in appreciation of your gifts and graces ; but if we talk this matter over ten years hence, it is very probable that you will find that God has spoken to you through me, even in this tone of discouragement." There is no work in the world so glorious as the work of a man who is truly called of God to preach the gospel ; on the other hand, there is no position in life so tormenting and humiliating as the position of a man who has run into the ministry without having been sent of God.

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"The only field left in modern times for the ancient orator's sublime conceptions, but laborious training, is the preacher's."—LORD LYTTON.

*On Monday November 6th, 1871, the usual monthly meeting was held. Thirty-eight students attended. In the course of a most spirited and useful interchange of opinion, the President made the following remarks :—*

The first outline which has been before us is upon the opening verse in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In making remarks upon the various points to which our attention is called in this exercise, let it be understood by all whom it may concern that severity is kindness. Nothing would be more agreeable than to applaud the work which is submitted for criticism ; but our agreeableness might tend to the ruin of the individual who seeks judgment. One of our principal engagements is to find

fault with each other's outlines, it being always understood that we speak everything in good faith, and with a sincere desire, not only for each other's improvement, but for the extension of the highest influence of the Christian ministry. The brother who submitted the outline immediately before us was, to my thinking, unfortunate in the tone which he adopted. That tone was undoubtedly most lulling and tranquillising, so much so that an effort was required on the part of the hearer to resist an influence which is justly condemned by all good preachers. The tone was much too plaintive. The impression produced upon my mind, looking at the exercise from a merely artistic point of view, was that the speaker was about to break some very painful news to us, and that to accommodate himself to the unpleasant circumstances he fell into a tone of pensive sympathy. The text, you will observe, is marked by what may be termed abruptness ; it announces itself suddenly, as with the blast of a trumpet ; no preparation whatever is sought by the writer ; at once he plunges *in medias res*,—“God, who at sundry times,” etc. In my opinion, the speaker would have done well to have copied somewhat of this abruptness, and so to have brought us more sharply to the line of the subject. The introduction was too long ; that is to say, too long considering the ground which the speaker set himself to occupy. He most properly assumed that God has spoken to men ; it is not permitted to us, as expositors of the Book, to import any hint or sign of doubt into our methods of stating the message with which we are charged. Properly, therefore, the speaker did not pause to argue the question whether God has spoken to men ; he considered that as a point settled beyond discussion. That being so, he repeated himself too much in his introduction ; so much so, in fact, that one began to think that the

repetition of the fact was intended as an excuse for want of argument, or was a confession of weakness as to the logical and historical side of the question. The outline, taken as a whole, was exceedingly bald. There was an absence of distinct thought in the points by which the subject was divided. If I understood the speaker aright in saying that God was not upon terms of intimacy or endearment with any of the Old Testament saints, I must remind him that one of them was called "the friend of God"; another of them "walked with God," and had this testimony that he "pleased God"; a third of them was described as "a man after God's own heart." With these instances before us, it is not correct to allege that God was not intimate with the fathers. I understood the speaker to say that Jesus Christ's revelation was final. He ought to have qualified or explained that statement. In the most important sense finality characterised the teaching of Jesus Christ: at the same time, it should be remembered that he promised "another Comforter," whose express function it was to lead the Church into all truth. We are not taught that the Holy Spirit will reveal truth which Jesus Christ left unrevealed; it is expressly declared that he will not speak of himself, and that he will "take of the things of Christ, and show them" unto the Church. We are therefore enriched, not by extended revelation, as to mere space and quantity, but by a profounder spiritual exposition of the truth which Jesus Christ with intentional incompleteness indicated to his immediate followers. The outline was deficient in pungency of application. It ought to have been brought more directly and forcibly home to the hearers. To have secured this end, it strikes me that another plan would have been preferable. For example, the text might have been treated inferentially, thus: God has spoken unto

us ; what then ? This inquiry would have excited attention and interest, as it certainly admits of three or four most expressive and practical answers. It would not be candid on my part were I to neglect to express dissatisfaction with some of the speaker's pronunciations. This matter of correct speaking is, believe me, of supreme consequence, so far as the delivery of discourses is concerned. In concluding these remarks, I wish most distinctly to say that in the speaker there are the most undoubted qualifications for ministerial service, and it will be his own fault if he become not a vigorous and useful preacher of Christian truth.

The second outline was upon the words, "Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief." I was exceedingly pleased with the graphic and pictorial manner in which the speaker set forth the circumstances under which the text was spoken. It has been objected by some of you that the treatment of the text was wordy. I cannot altogether admit the justness of this criticism. Let us remember that there is a possibility of our being too terse in public speech. Sometimes, considering the difference of understanding and culture represented by our hearers, we are bound to put the same thought into a variety of forms in order to impress their attention. In a book it is different, because a reader can go again and again to the page, whereas in speech he hears but for a moment, and is then instantly hurried to some new phase of the subject. I regretted in this case the defectiveness of exposition which was so conspicuous. The language of the text ought to have been very carefully explained. What did the suppliant mean by "help thou mine unbelief"? Was his faith struggling with doubt? Did he feel that how great soever might be his faith, it was

still insufficient to meet the great expectation of his love and the poignant anguish of his heart? It should have been pointed out also that men must bring something on which Jesus Christ can work. That is to say, there must be in the man a germ of faith, love, hope, desire, which Jesus Christ can bring to maturity. Undoubtedly the speaker has proved that he possesses the sympathy, the human tenderness, the strong and noble gentleness without which no minister can ever be widely and permanently useful.

With regard to the third outline (upon the words, "To me to live is Christ," etc.), I shall not further remark than to advise the speaker to read night and day little but Euclid. He evidently requires the severest intellectual drill. He has wonder, a high tendency to worship, and meditativeness. What he wants is to be strengthened on the more purely intellectual side of his nature. He must avoid all poor reading, all little tracts, all literature that is at all puerile, and must betake himself for two years at least to Euclid. His gentleness, pensiveness, and simplicity may always be depended upon; he must now see to it that his one object be the attainment of strength, acuteness, and grasp.

Looking at the whole subject of preaching, so far as it has come under our attention this morning, let me express the conviction that we require in all our pulpit work more scope, more distinctiveness, and infinitely more practical sympathy. So many preachers seem to move upon a space hardly bigger than a thumb-nail. They never get away,—they have no wide outlook, and no comprehensive range. A preacher ought to show in all his efforts the richness of his reading, the variety of his attainments, and the width of his sympathies; to show them, of course, not

ostentatiously, but to focalise them into one strenuous endeavour to convince men of sin, and bring them to the one Redeemer of the race. Our ministry must really have something about it distinctive. It is not enough that we persevere in repeating things that nobody cares to dispute. It is not enough that we say true things ; we must say them in a true tone, with most fervid earnestness, and with all possibility of distinctiveness. We listen to some preachers, and the only impression produced upon our mind is that what they are saying may be all right enough and well enough in its way, but it is not so put that we care anything either for the man or his message. The preacher ought to speak as no other man speaks. His ministry ought to be a contrast to all the influences which make up our ordinary life. On hearing him, we ought instantly to feel that this man has a message unlike all other messages ; and it should be his business to persuade or even startle men into thoughtfulness, and especially by the strength of his intelligent and pure sympathy to give hearts to feel that Christ's gospel is the true answer to human woe.

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*On Monday, February 5th, 1872, the usual monthly meeting was held. The President made the following remarks :—*

Before proceeding to offer a criticism upon the outlines now presented, there are some things bearing upon the general subject of homiletics which I am wishful to say. First of all, now that we know each other so well, I should be exceedingly glad if we could give ourselves to the homiletic study of some particular portion or portions of the Scriptures. Instead of allowing each man to take any text with which he may suppose himself competent to

deal, I should propose to take, say, a gospel or an epistle, and to go steadily through it homiletically. By faithfully pursuing this course a student would in due time amass a very large amount of the very material which will be most useful to him as a public man. Were this course followed, either at college or in some such institute as this, the student would at the end of his attendance have in his possession a great number of outlines which have received the benefit of sincere and able criticism, and which would be almost immediately available for pulpit work. In this way his college course would be fraught with the highest practical advantage. The student would be more than a grammarian, a philosopher, or a mathematician ; he would possess the richest resources as a Christian expositor. We could not, however, carry out a proposition of this kind without distinctly pledging ourselves man by man conscientiously to go through the whole course. There must be no lapse in the attendance, no shirkings of obligation ; but a hearty and zealous devotion to the minutest details of the work. Suppose we go homiletically through the gospel by John : what a rich store of sermonic material would be accumulated ! The indolent man alone would avail himself of the outlines which he has submitted to our criticism ; the conscientious man would regard such outlines as mere hints for more careful and elaborate structures ; still the outlines would stimulate and suggest when he was enjoying the privacy of his study.

With regard to the general subject of preparing sermons, allow me to put before you a few questions which I find it very useful to put to myself both before and after preparation. Have I given a critical exposition of the words of the text ? Have I shown off my own cleverness, or magnified the revelation of God ? The things which I have

said are good enough in themselves, and some, perhaps, may be fairly considered brilliant or vivid ; but did such things really come out of the text, and tend to give correct and emphatic expression to its spirit ? Our object is not merely to say good things, but to extend, according to its own nature, the particular truth conveyed by the text which we have chosen. What will be the probable effect of this preparation upon a miscellaneous audience ? It is probably adapted to a section of my congregation—to the educated, or the speculative, the highly orthodox, or the “advanced thinkers,”—but what will be its effect upon the general auditory ? Is this discourse adapted to teach the way of salvation to earnest inquirers ? It is not suggested that every discourse should be addressed to unconverted men, or should bear exclusively upon the way of salvation ; at the same time it is insisted most energetically that the preacher should not forget that he is expected by the Master to conduct his ministry as one who would save them that hear him. It is a false standard of judgment to inquire whether every sermon is a full exposition of the way of salvation. In the stated ministry we must have variety of teaching. Sometimes we are to speak to saints ; sometimes we are called upon to expound passages of Scripture which have no immediate bearing upon the subject of salvation ; sometimes we have to rebuke special sins of the day ; yet though all this must be faithfully done, it must be constantly borne in mind that it is a gospel we have to preach, and that the one purpose of that gospel is to bring men to a sense of sin, and to profound sympathy with God through our blessed and infinitely sufficient Saviour. By asking yourselves some such questions as have now been indicated, you may be enabled to correct some errors, to supply some deficiencies, and to give a sharper and stronger point to many appeals.

The first outline submitted to-day was upon the parable of the wedding feast, described in the opening verses of the 22nd chapter of the gospel by Matthew. That outline exposed itself to several damaging criticisms. The preacher found fault not only with the grammar, but with the moral limitations of part of his text, and yet failed to substantiate any amendment, though he hastily suggested one. Unless we be prepared to amend a text, and to justify the amendment by sound history and criticism, it is infinitely better not to unsettle the minds of our hearers. The general exposition of the parable was obviously deficient in the evangelical element with which, as it appears to me, this parable is pre-eminently charged. So far as the outline goes, no one could have supposed that the preacher had a gospel to proclaim. He spoke of people living good lives, and being sincere, but in using such elastic terms he missed the very point of all evangelical and sound preaching. What are good lives? What is sincerity? By good lives are we to understand decent behaviour and virtuous public relations? How are lives made good? As to sincerity, it is a most mischievous fallacy which attaches to sincerity any virtue whatever, except it be clearly shown that the sincerity is well founded and well directed. A man may be a sincere heathen as well as a sincere Christian, but if the Christian religion be explained to him and urged upon his acceptance, the value of his sincerity becomes entirely changed. The preacher seemed to be particularly interested in some inquiries, the practical importance of which amounts to very little. For example, he was anxious to determine the identity of the man who had not on a wedding garment. He suggested (mainly, however, on the authority of others) that the unfurnished guest was probably Judas Iscariot. Who cares to know the name of the hapless guest? The

name is not of the slightest consequence. It is not a question of personal identity, but of moral character. Better, therefore, that the man be known as the guest who had not on a wedding garment than that his identity should be fixed and his mere name be held up to the contempt of mankind. The preacher said, "I have been informed that Jesus Christ had an historical foundation upon which his parables were constructed." Who gave him this information? It is a piece of information not worth giving, and certainly not worth receiving. Jesus Christ had undoubtedly power enough of fancy or imagination to construct his parables without going in quest of family gossip or provincial history. There is a reverence that is irreverent. We may give something with one hand, and subtract very much with the other. A statement of the kind made by the preacher could only excite the curiosity of his hearers, without in any way ministering to their solid instruction.

The second outline was upon the text, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," etc. The vigour of the language and the intense earnestness of the speaker greatly delighted me. As there is a criticism of commendation as well as a criticism of destruction, I wish emphatically to say how much gratified I was alike by the matter and the manner of the speaker. I must say, however, that he conveyed to me the impression that he was reciting rather than trusting himself to the extemporeaneous expression of well considered thoughts. I think I never saw a man who looked so persistently and so benignantly at a yellow wall as the speaker looked at the wall of this building. I am not sure that he saw one of us during the delivery of his discourse. In my judgment this was unfortunate. It gave the impression that he

was preaching before us, and not to us. I do not know that there is, as has been suggested by some of you, any immorality in recitation in the pulpit. In many respects recitation is preferable to reading. Of course everything depends upon the manner of the reader or the reciter. There is an art which conceals art ; it is difficult to attain, but the attainment well repays the difficulty. There were some deficiencies in the discourse which I will frankly point out, with the assurance that their indication in no degree detracts from the compliments which I have justly paid to the eloquence of the expression and the earnestness of the speaker's manner. I wish he had given a more careful and exhaustive definition of the word "sin." The Church is in danger of forgetting what sin really is. Sin is too often thought of in its accidental phases and relations, rather than in its spiritual reality. I wish, too, that the speaker had been a little more copious and emphatic in his remarks upon self-deception,—"we deceive ourselves": we do not deceive God ; we do not even deceive each other ; we deceive ourselves,—show how the self-deceived man loses all power, excludes from himself the highest benefits of divine revelation, and puts an end to his moral progress. I was pleased with the speaker's remarks upon "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." He might add something in this section of his discourse : the text does not say he is merciful to forgive us our sins, he is pitiful or compassionate to forgive us our sins ; it connects human forgiveness with the faithfulness and justice of the offended One. The Lord our God is one Lord, not only in the majesty and completeness of his personality, but in the unity and indivisibleness of his attributes : when he forgives, his righteousness is as much involved in the act as is his mercy. Let me again most warmly commend the intense earnestness of the

speaker. I shall hope to find him amongst the foremost preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let him avoid affectation (of which there was just the faintest spice in his manner); let him be increasingly careful in the exposition of the moral purpose of his texts; let him watch his spirit with unceasing concern for its sanctification and enlightenment; and through his ministry many will be brought to inquire the way of salvation.

There is hardly time to allude to the third sketch which was put before us,—upon the healing of the centurion's servant. When the speaker gave the points, I could not see their relation to the subject; but when he quoted the verses upon which he based the points, I was delighted to find how truly and skilfully he had seized the spirit of the text. Taking it all in all, the outline is certainly one of the best I ever heard, and I heartily wish I could preach it in my own pulpit, and afterwards publish it in the *City Temple*. To hear such an outline is a special privilege. The speaker has an eye which sees hidden beauties, and a power of expression which will make many fellow students sharers of his profitable discoveries. I am glad to find that though he read his outline to-day, he never reads in the course of his public ministry. Having read to us, there was of course somewhat of stiffness and labour in the speaker's manner; but that outline, delivered with fervour, and with such vivacity of expression as is incidental to extemporaneous speech, would undoubtedly produce a most profound and happy impression upon any intelligent congregation.

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"When I compose a sermon I imagine myself consulted on some doubtful piece of business. I give my whole application to determine the person who has recourse to me to act the good and proper part. I exhort him, I urge him, *and I quit him not until he has yielded to my persuasions.*"—MASSILLON.

*On Monday, April 8th, 1872, the usual monthly meeting was held. The President made the following remarks:—*

The portion of Scripture appointed for homiletic analysis is the 8th chapter of the gospel by Mark, verses 1-9, in which is described the miracle of Jesus Christ feeding four thousand men with seven loaves and a few small fishes. Some time ago I took occasion to make a few severe remarks upon an outline submitted for criticism by one of our number. It is not too much to say that I was greatly discouraged by the style of outline that was then laid before us. The same student having to-day made a second attempt, I feel bound to express my surprise at the most gratifying improvement which he has made. The difference between the two outlines amounts to a contrast greatly in favour of the effort which has been made this morning. I gladly say this word for the encouragement of a man who has so resolutely betaken himself to the improvement of his method. Looking at the outline in itself, and without reference to any other outline which the same hand has sketched, I have to point out that the main divisions are by no means equal to the subordinate sections. The principal heads are indeed very vaguely expressed; whereas the suggestions which were thrown in at the end seemed to me to be terse and most pertinent. I advise, therefore, that what may be called the postscript of the sermon replace what was intended to be the main scheme; I am sure that such a transposition will be greatly for the advantage of those who listen to the discourse.

The second outline discovered considerable analytical skill. Looking at it, however, in its artistic relations, I am afraid it is chargeable with the falsehood of excess. The preacher looked at the miracle as illustrating the character of Jesus Christ ; and his divisions were (1) Christ's attractiveness, (2) Christ's considerateness, (3) Christ's devoutness, (4) Christ's bountifulness, (5) Christ's economy, (6) Christ's true greatness. Now these are evidently commonplace, not in the sense of being poor or worthless, but in the sense of being applicable to almost every other miracle which Jesus Christ performed. This is not so much an outline of any one incident in the New Testament as a scheme of the whole ministry as well as personality of the Saviour. It sounded to me, as the preacher gave out his divisions, rather as the programme of a course of lectures than the plan of a single sermon. The preacher, then, attempted decidedly too much. He overweighted his discourse with matter, and distracted the attention of his hearers by his diversity. I am not prepared to say that any one of the points is not to be found in the substance of the incident ; but I am constrained to suggest that in this case the half would have been better than the whole. Where a preacher sees so much in any one text as our friend has seen in this, it would be the better course to deliver a series of sermons than attempt to cram such various material into one discourse. You may put too much shot into your gun ; you may use too much powder in a single loading. Under such circumstances it will be almost a miracle if the preacher escape suicide.

The third outline was unquestionably ambitious, but certainly not wanting in skill, although the skill was so undisciplined as to put its owner into considerable danger.

The impression made upon my mind was that the preacher mentally observed after each division, "Beat that if you can!" His introduction was too ornate, and undoubtedly too far-fetched. You yourselves have already said so, and I take the liberty of emphatically endorsing your criticism. In his introduction the preacher dwelt upon the fact that all nature is a temple. He had a side-fling at the name rather than at the reality of Pantheism and he completed his exordium by a quotation of beautiful poetry. From such an introduction we expected a great deal. When you hear that a man's Christian name is Isaac Newton, you are led to expect that his surname will be Kepler at the very least, and it is undoubtedly a blow to your feelings to find that his name is Skittles or Wiggins. This surname may be well enough in itself but it is thrown into such unfavourable contrast by its gorgeous introduction. It is the same with the outline before us. It does not hold together consistently from beginning to end. There is an enormous display of a gold chain and heavy seal, but, alas! the timekeeper itself when exhibited proves to be but a very small silver watch. I advise that the introduction be cut down to the point of sobriety and common sense, and that the beautiful lines with which it was enriched be added at the end of the discourse, if used at all.

In constructing a discourse, the first question we should ask is, Which point should have most prominence? In every discourse there should be one supreme point, to save the minds of the hearers from distraction, and to enable the preacher to expend most usefully his whole energy. A discourse may be full of points, and yet have but one point; there is such a thing as unity of combination; there is a unity of mere proximity, which you

have in a sack of beans; and there is the unity of interdependence and mutual complement, which you have in the solar system. Having considered the most prominent point, and written fully upon it, it may be usefully asked in the next place, How much of this elaborate expression can be safely omitted? If you be faithful to this inquiry, you will probably have to put your pen through many a fine sentence, and strike the cruel knife through many a grand metaphor. All out-of-the-way words will justly suffer at your hands, and all whimsical eccentricities will perish under your judicial frown. Understand that a word is not necessarily hard simply because it is long. Some of the longest words in the English language are some of the easiest. I refer, therefore, to words which are unfamiliar, in speaking thus of their ruthless erasure. Having reduced the discourse to proper dimensions, and increased the intensity of its expression by the removal of all extravagances, there will remain this solemn inquiry, to which the preacher should devote his most anxious consideration, How can the whole be most successfully applied? Exposition without application is fuel without fire. When the preacher omits the application he betrays his cause. But how is the application to be conducted? How tender it should be! How persuasive the tone of the preacher! How fervent the spirit of the exhortation! The preacher should beware of separating himself too remotely from his hearers in applying the subject which he has been expounding. He should not always say "you" in addressing his audience, he should often say "we," thus making himself one of the people, a listener as well as a preacher, and showing that the truth on which he has been insisting has its application to his own heart as well as to the hearts of those who have heard him. There must be sympathy between the preacher

and the listener. The preacher loses immense power when he sets himself off at a distance, and avails himself of the speech of a superior being. The longer I live, the more I feel that the truth which we preach must be applied by most tender, importunate, and vigorous exhortation. I yield to no man in valuing the worth of exposition. Without exposition, the ministry will speedily become not only worthless, but mischievous ; it will bring upon itself the just contempt of intelligence and earnestness. First of all, then, let there be clear, simple, accurate explanation and enforcement of the truth of the text which the preacher has taken, and then let there be the most urgent and persistent application of the truth to the wants of men. I hold that sound exposition is one of the principal guarantees of hortatory earnestness. If the preacher has convinced me that he has conscientiously laboured to find out the grammatical, philosophical, and spiritual meaning of his text, he has by so much prepared me to hear any word of warning or entreaty which he may feel impelled to utter. On the other hand, if he has been slovenly in his exposition, if he has left hard words unexplained, if he has slothfully avoided the difficulties of his text, when he comes to exhort me to adopt some particular course, I shall decline his leadership because I distrust his fidelity.

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*The usual monthly meeting was held on Monday, June 3rd, 1872. Outlines were presented by three members of the class. The subject was, "The great Commandment of the Law." The first outline, which was presented by a clergyman of the Church of England, elicited from the President the following remarks :—*

This is by far the best outline which the preacher has produced during his attendance at this institute. I was

afraid the introduction was going to be too long, but in proportion to the remainder of the discourse there was not a word too much in it. The references to the context were exceedingly happy and useful. The preacher does not seem to pursue the method of putting his leading thought into the divisions of his subject. His heads are indicative rather than propositional. For example, he proceeded to-day in the first place to point out the difficulty of the question which was put to Jesus Christ ; in the second place, to show the skill of the Saviour's reply ; and in the third place, to show the effects produced by Jesus Christ's answer. Now, so far as these heads are concerned, they absolutely mean next to nothing. Everything in such an outline depends upon the filling up. The preacher, however, must take encouragement from the fact that some of the greatest preachers have adopted precisely the same method. The divisions of Robertson of Brighton for instance, are often very poor, and even feeble, yet the expansion is as a general rule most comprehensive and brilliant. Some of Robertson's outlines are almost ridiculous in brevity and inexpressiveness, but every sermon which he preached was full of life and light. One of you has charged the preacher with want of vigour in his method of delivering the discourse. I cannot accept the criticism as just. It would be very difficult for a man to reach the point of vehemence in a class like ours. We should be inclined to laugh at his sermon, and to resent his vehemence as an artificial display. I congratulate the preacher on the great strides which he has so manifestly taken during his attendance at this class. Your criticisms have never been withheld from his exercises, and they have obviously been acted upon with a spirit resolute upon improvement.

I am much obliged to our young friend who went to

the pulpit end of the chapel and spoke to us through the whole length of the edifice. His was not so much an outline as a running exposition. The introduction was indeed boyish and beside the mark, but the exposition was in several cases not only accurate, but most interesting and powerful. There was certainly a marked want of continuity and oneness in the comment. What he gave us ought rather to have been the substance of the introduction than the exhaustion of the subject of the text. Having paraphrased the language and modernised the incident in its verbal expression, he ought to have summed up the whole in some two or three striking lessons. If there was anything like unity in the speaker's mind, it was very much the unity of a newly built house which has not been roofed in. The exercise wanted completeness. So far as it went, it was well done, but the links wanted to be put together before they could be trusted as a chain. The delivery, too, was very good for the first few minutes, but on account of its want of variety it soon became monotonous. The preacher must study the music of utterance. It is not enough to say our words, we must throw into them the heartiness which changes the emphasis intelligently and rhythmically. The preacher's power was shown in simple, calm, lucid statement, and in the power of giving a happy turn to many phrases. I missed the striking power without which a preacher can have but little influence in a mixed congregation. Worst of all, the preacher read his discourse! He preached a written paper! When he attempted to lift up his head and speak to us in a natural manner, we could see that he was still the victim of his manuscript, and this impaired his influence. I do not see how we can be both readers and orators at the same moment. It is true we may read oratorically, but how to get into the highest region of

oratory through the medium of a written essay is a matter upon which I can throw no light.

I am tempted to come to a conclusion which I have long resisted as a preacher. That conclusion is to care little or nothing for merely artistic truth in the structure of a sermon. Some of us have prided ourselves not a little upon logical arrangement in our outlines. It is however made clear to me the more I read the history of preaching, and take note of the manners of living men, that in very many cases the sermons which are illogical and even grotesque in outline are most useful in arresting the attention of popular audiences. When tradesmen and others gather around our pulpits, it is not to be supposed that they are on the outlook for homiletic proportion and a skilful distribution of the divisions of the subject. So long as a sermon tells upon their mind and their heart, they care absolutely nothing for its architecture. On the other hand, it is very plain that it is possible to admire the taste and the skill of a sermonic outline without feeling the power of evangelical doctrine. Some outlines of sermons which have been proved to have secured most gratifying results have been simply laughable as attempts at correct analysis. This is undoubtedly discouraging to the mere structurist. There is indeed a reflection which comes to save us from a reckless disregard of proportion in the distribution of our subjects, namely, is it not possible to be at once just in critical outline and pungent in the statement and application of divine truth? It does not follow that because an outline is bad a sermon must be good, nor does it follow that because an outline is very skilfully planned a sermon must be edifying or otherwise useful. Gentlemen, whatever be your particular method of analysing or discussing a text, let me plead with you in the name of

our common Master that above all things you seek to save some ! Do not try to be clever ; try rather to be real and strong. Have no care whatsoever for mere art ; spend your soul's strength in importunate persuasion and sincere entreaty. We must save men ! Men are to be saved by the simple and wise presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus ; and in order that such presentation may be secured we must never stray one step from the sorrowful but glorious Cross. Let us often ask ourselves some searching questions : Why do we preach ? Are we intent in any degree upon self-display ? Is our ministry a mere profession, or is it a direct and irresistible vocation of the Holy Ghost ? In our preaching do we show our own cleverness or the need of the work of Jesus Christ ? Is our genius praised at the expense of our goodness ? These questions cut the heart like a sharp sword, but in such wounding there is the beginning of true and enduring healing. Love the Saviour himself if you would love His work. Feel the gospel if you would be able to urge it upon others. Be prayerful if you would speak to men with the voice which reaches the ear of the heart.

## PRAYER.

"THE Lord is in his holy temple ; let all the earth keep silence before him."

How broad are the welcomes of thy love, thou Father of us all ! Thou dost shut the door upon none ; thou dost wait to be gracious ; thou art longing for the prodigals. Return, ye backsliding men ! is the voice of thy love : may we hear it and heed it now. We are full of distress ; our souls are in bitterness : wilt thou hear men from the great deep ? wilt thou hear the cry of human distress ? Dost thou welcome the proud and the valiant and the strong ? or hast thou a place close beside thee for the brokenhearted, the weary, the children of necessity and pain ? Thou callest to those who are afar off ; thy mercy seeks the sinner. Thou dost not reproach those who crawl to the Cross and who say, "God be merciful to me a sinner !" Thine is no stinging rebuke ; thou dost not lacerate us with reproaches, thou dost look down upon us through the tears of love, thou dost stretch out towards us the hands of redemption. Thy mercy endureth for ever. Thy mercy is as a great deep ; we cannot tell the length or the depth thereot ; it is like thyself—immeasurable, unspeakable. To thy mercy as shown in the Cross we all come : we come every day ; there we leave the burden of our sin, there we learn to hope and trust and love. We have all things in the Cross. Awful Cross, tender Cross : so full of death, so full of life. We have all things in that Cross, all things in that Christ. Do not turn any of us away. Some are sick of the world and of themselves and of the narrowness and poverty of time ; some dare not pray, they think that lips so foul ought not to be opened in supplication ; some are full of fear ; one is saying, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment !" Amen.

## I.

## DRIVEN BY DISTRESS.

"Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?"—  
JUDGES xi. 7.

A VERY natural inquiry. We make it every day. There are some friends we should never see if distress did not drive them to the door. We should never see the handwriting of others if there was not a little pinch at home. They never come to us in the sunshine, they never come to bring us anything ; they come to us in the time of distress. That is human. We have no difficulty in believing this inquiry to have been made. Criticism retires from this interrogation with nothing to do. The question was certainly asked ; it is asked every day ; it is a revelation of human nature on both sides. Jephthah had not been well used by his kinsmen. He was an illegitimate child ; he was hated by those who were in the true succession. They took hold of him and put him out ; they drove him away. There was a brand upon him, a stigma, a mark they could not tolerate. Oh ! that hospitable wilderness ! It receives all the Hagaris and Jephthahs of the world. Sometimes we almost say, Kind wilderness, home of the exile, asylum of the friendless. To such the wilderness is like a garden, a great healing-place, all nature healing, giving balms and medicaments, and just what the bruised life wants. It is a kind nature after all ; it has its rough sides, its great tempests, and thunders, and whirlwinds, and earthquakes, and terrible signs among the stars ; but, after all, nature—the little nature we know, the green nature—is very healing. She

drapes the ruin with ivy ; she grows a little moss over the sore place ; she is busy as it were preparing for some one who may come at any moment—it may be some king, some critic of the universe. Into the wilderness Jephthah was driven. But the time of stress, hard wear and tear, came upon the sons of the house, and when fight went deadly against them they said, “ Is not Jephthah a mighty man of valour ? After all was he responsible for his identity ? Is he not hidden in the land of Tob ? ” So when the children of Ammon made war against Israel they sent for their big quasi-brother. Jephthah, when they came—great giant, soft in heart as a woman, yet with an iron fist and a voice that was not without accent of reproach—said to them, “ Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress ? ” There was a latent rebuke in the inquiry. Have we an ear for things latent in nature and in life ? Do we always want the broad, vulgar, palpable challenge ? Have we not grown up into sensitiveness enough to feel that all beautiful things rebuke wickedness, all gentle things are harsh with the wrath of the Lamb when they see sin and wrong ? Why do we not believe kind nature, watchful Providence, spiritual ministries, when they ask us questions that are terrible as judgments ? We do not want them to put into pen-and-ink indictment and impeachment the day and the date and detail, the precise and burning accusation ; all that we should do for ourselves if our hearts were alive with true sensitiveness. Sometimes a look is a judgment. We have been turned away in a manner that signified that we had committed sins innumerable and unpardonable. There is a silent rebuke ; there is a silence more terrible than thunder.

How God might say this to us all ! Might he not look down upon us when we are upon our unwilling knees and

say, "What ! you there ? what dost thou want ?" Then will come out some tale of pitiable necessity, the all-begging petition, the outworn supplication for something ; the suppliant is in distress, the fight has gone hard against him, he has but little bread at home, his house is desolate, his life is in front of him like an angry cloud ; and, behold, he prayeth ! What a mockery of reverence ! what an irony palpable and inexcusable ! An atheist might pray so ; a man that never heard of God except remotely might assume that very attitude and lift to Heaven that very look, partly of vacancy, partly of expectancy. That is an atheist's poor prayer. Why do we not come to God under other circumstances with psalm and song of adoration ? Why do we not praise him on the lute and harp ? Why not praise him with the sound of the trumpet ? These questions should get into our hearts very deeply. Does God ask these questions ? If he does not put the inquiry, he makes the announcement ; he says in the Prophets again and again, "In the time of their distress they will call upon me." He knows exactly when they will come, under what circumstances they will petition the throne. He knows what is man : for who made man but himself ? All the intricacies and mysteries, all the deviousness of the heart's way God knows ; and when he sees whole hosts of men turning away from him, he says, "They will return." When, Lord ? In stress of weather ; when the firstborn child dies they will begin to pray ; when the fortune withers they will ask the way to church ; when health declines they will send for the holy man and ask him with inexcusable impudence if he can pray. It is along the pathways of darkness and storm that men come home. Oh, hear me and be wise, now in the time of youth and strength and prosperity ! In full-blooded health, now in the June time when all nature is full of beauty and full of promise, even

now surprise God ! he permits himself to be surprised by unexpected prayer.

How the Bible might put that inquiry to us !—Why are ye come to me now that ye are in distress ? We keep the Bible for dark days. We are very well versed in the Psalms ; we know nothing about the earlier books, but we have had so much affliction that we have almost committed many of the Psalms to memory. If you will hand me your Bible that you use most, I will tell you the history of your house. Pass it to me. It opens of itself at certain places—not at Genesis, but at the Psalms. You have had trouble, you have had loss ; you know the grim presence of Death, you have heard his footfall on the stair. If the Bible were a reproachful book, how it could look up at us and burn us with its look, as it says, " Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress ? You never read me in sunshine ; you never read me through. I am not a Bible in parts, I am the Bible, the Book, one Book, a continuous, augmenting, ever ascending strain of music. What have you done but take out a minor note here and there because you are sad and in trouble ? You do not know me," the Bible says, and says it not resentfully, but truly, revealingly to your own soul. No man knows the Bible who has only read it in verses and in texts, in parts and in parcels ; he knows it who, beginning at the beginning, has gone through to find that there is no end. Is that true about your Bible ? Do not tell me you have kept it well, and treasured it much ; do not remind me how elegant it is in appearance ; have you thumbed it well, right from the very opening straight through all its wondrous way ? Tell me, did you ever see such a panorama, such pageants, such visions ? did you ever hear such music ? How sad it is, after all, that men know less

about the Bible than about any other book ! Why do you turn round and wonder if you have anything to read ? Why, you have everything to read if you have the Bible. Everything is in the Bible that is worth knowing. Yet this book, so full, so pregnant, so suggestive, so radiant at every point, has occasion justly to say even to professing Christian people, "Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress ?" Yet blessed be God for this subtle ministry of pain and sorrow in life ! Distress is a kind of veiled angel that brings many to the sanctuary, to the altar, to the oracle of revelation, and to the very gate of heaven. How eloquent is misery ! Men do not know what eloquence is until they are in real burning misery of soul ; then the dumb speak, then those who are of hesitant speech learn the noble fluency of prayer. We have read this day of the woman who grew in passion as she approached the Saviour. She said, "Lord, thou Son of David, have mercy on me !" That was liturgical ; "thou Son of David" was fine in history, noble in discrimination ; there was a stateliness about that petition, though the pathos of it is unmistakable ; but when a little parleying took place she dropped the "Son of David" and said "Lord, help me !" Misery drives us to simplicity ; pain is direct of speech ; the cry of the heart wants no pomp of rhetoric. Are you in earnest ? If so, you will make your own prayers, bring them out of the depths of your heart, and they will be eloquent with necessity. We should not have been so religious if we had not been so distressed. Distress gets a man out of himself ; distress teaches a man that his true help is not really within his own nature, but beyond it. Oh, that "beyond" !—just there as a beginning, but immeasurable in extent and duration. So long as you are in yourself, so long as you are able men, clever men, sagacious men, you will get nothing from God. He gives

nothing to ability. He lives to give to those who have nothing, yet cry for himself. Do not keep company with clever Christians, with men who have reduced heaven to a certain scale, and who can measure everything by that scale. Keep company with those who are meek and lowly of heart, men who have a contrite spirit, men who are ennobled by reverence, men who will ask questions with timidity and wait for answers with patience.

This is the purpose of distress, to bring us by the nearest road to God, to empty us of ourselves, to dismiss our ingenuity and our cleverness and our perspicacity, and to make us feel that we are nothing, and have nothing, and deserve nothing, in consequence of sin, but that we must look to Heaven for everything. "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills whence cometh my help; my help cometh from the Lord who made heaven and earth; he will not suffer my foot to be moved"; the moon shall be light enough and the sun shall scorch me no more because of the attempering and merciful providence of the Father. We are most when we are least: "when I am weak then am I strong"; when I cast myself most upon God, I can do most for myself in the best sense of the term. "Yea, I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me." Distress has come to bring you home; distress is bringing you to the true Jephthah; distress is a minister employed by Jesus Christ. I never know what Jesus is in all the fulness of his character, in all the richness of his spiritual quality, until I contrast him with such an instance as is now before us. Jephthah was only human; he therefore represented the simple human aspect of things. He asked why they had come to him in their distress; he seized them with a giant's grasp and held them under him, and said, "If I save you from men, shall I be your head?" and

they said, "Yes." Jephthah stung them with reproaches, bargained with them for the monarchy, and then went out and fought their battles. I never know what Jesus is until I contrast him with this species of conduct. How was it when they went to the Saviour? "They brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy"—"and he said unto them, Why are ye come unto me now when ye are in distress?" No, no! "He healed them." Not a word of reproach, no going back upon them, saying, "You should have eaten less, you should have drunk less, you should have paid more attention to your health; all these things come of the violation of the laws of nature, and you are responsible for these violations." Not a word. How does Jephthah stand against that picture? How does Jesus figure himself now in the presence of this contrast? Behold, how he lifts himself up in ineffable majesty! Without reproaching them, "he healed them." "And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet"—unloaded them there. And what did Jesus do? He said, "This is very human; you would not have come to me if you had not been in distress." No—"and he healed them." He came to seek and to save that which was lost; he said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is there that I see the deity of Christ; it is there that my Lord separates himself from all other men, and stands alone in the dignity of his Godhead. How like the God revealed in Isaiah!—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thought; let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Jephthah reproached.

Jephthah bargained ; Christ does not reproach, Christ does not bargain for selfishness : Christ heals. He can heal us, he can heal us now ; he can heal the most fatal, the most virulent diseases. Your hearts are through and through diseased, yet one touch of that wounded hand, one drop of that offered blood, and the past is cleansed, and the future made bright as promised summer. To this Christ I call all men. Not to a good man, not to an able physician, but to God the Son, the dying God, the atoning God, the rising God,—a mystery in language, almost a contradiction in mere terms, but carrying with it a unity of meaning which we must live long to realise and appreciate.

What is true of Christ is true of all men who have Christ's spirit. When Jesus painted a man who was in great sorrow at home, how did he represent that man? Why, did he not almost draw a portrait of himself? It is said that all great writers of drama and fiction and other imagination find it difficult to get beyond themselves; there is some touch or feature of himself in the poet's noblest dream and fullest portraiture. So when Jesus pictures a man who is in distress because one is not, he says that the moment the son came back again he fell on his neck and kissed him, and never said a word of reproach, never told him when he went away, never told him what he had suffered, never said a word about the past, except, "He was dead, he is alive ; lost—found : light up the house, let it burn with glory !" All men who have the Christ-spirit receive people in that way. Now, if your child come home to-night receive him so. If the poor lost one should come and tap at the window, do not go into words and questions and arguments and mean disputes ; remember your own sinfulness and worthlessness, and go out and throw the door wide open, and never say

one bitter word. You expect to be received so yourselves : with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. If any soul has come to you drenched with sorrow, laden with misery, do not begin to argue and to say, "You ought, and you must, and the blame is yours." Now you are losing what little divinity of nature you had. Rather say, "Let the dead past bury its dead ; let us live and be glad in the Lord." The whole music of Christ is a music of welcome. He could reproach men—he never reproached those who came with a real desire to see his love. Proud Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, he blasted with rebukes, he tore them down and plunged their dignity in hell. And once some poor mean souls that would not give up themselves or the world came after him, and he said, "You have come for the loaves and fishes, and you know it." But when people conscious of sin came to him, he said, "Come nearer !" When one woman said, "If I may but touch the craspedon, the little bit of corner, I shall be whole," he looked at her as he only could look, and after a little conversation and questioning, he said, "Go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

"Heal us, Emanuel ! hear our prayer ;  
We wait to feel thy touch ;  
Deep-wounded souls to thee repair,  
And, Saviour, we are such."

Remember the blind man and the deaf man ; she, too, who healing virtue stole, remember her. She was answered, 'Daughter, go in peace, thy faith hath made thee whole.' Thou wilt not reproach us and tell us what we ought to have been and ought to have done. There is no reproach in thy Cross. Thy Cross is written all over with pardon, release, welcome. It is a glorious gospel !

## PRAYER.

LORD JESUS, abide in our hearts ! We shall then live, and that forever; our heaven will be begun, we shall have tasted of the bliss of those who do not die, because of the indwelling of thy love and light. Thou hast gone away from us that thou mightest be nearer to us ; thou hast vanished from our eyes that we might discern thee more perfectly with the vision of our soul. May we know that death is abolished. We may see thee if we will, our love may fasten its eyes upon thee night and day, and never forego the ineffable vision. Dwell therefore in our hearts ; break sacramental bread to us every morning, noon, and eventide ; give us to drink of thy blood, then we shall have life in us, yea, eternal life, and we shall know no more the pain and fear of mortality. We bless thee for this great hope, we thank thee for this triumphant faith ; may we live no longer a mean and narrow life, but live the life of angels, and of crowned men, and of souls that have already entered into the joy of their Lord. We pray to this end that thy Holy Spirit may be given to us without measure ; may he be a fire upon the altar of our lives, may he be a constant inspiration and stimulus, so that we shall have no fear, no sense of timidity, but shall be emboldened to speak the Lord's word, and exemplify the Lord's life in all our way. We make this great prayer because thou art a great God and a great Giver, and thou hast challenged us to open our mouths widely that they may be filled ; thou wilt keep back no good thing from us ; yea, the lions may want and suffer and die, but thou wilt not cause those who trust in thee to want any good thing. We therefore pray thee again and again with all tenderness of desire and love to come to us, and abide with us, and continue with us until the day break and the shadows flee away. If any have not begun their fellowship with thee, may they begin now ; speak to such and tell them that now is the only time recognised by earnest men ; if any have not been led to the Cross, may they be led now ; if any have failed to repent, may this be the moment of contrition and heartbreak. Come, Lord Jesus ; come, thou Holy Spirit ; come, thou Father of us all ; and work in our hearts the miracle of revived love, of conscious sin, of profound and unutterable desire for reconciliation and pardon and peace. The Lord hear us ; then heaven shall be close at hand. Amen.

## II.

## TOWARDS THE CROSS.

"And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face : and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him. And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did ? But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village."—LUKE ix. 51-56.

"**H**E steadfastly set his face": literally, he steeled his face ; he turned his face into steel, he hardened his face : he made adamant of it. You may choose any figure you please that shall signify that the Lord Jesus Christ wrought up his will to the highest tension, to the largest point of resoluteness. The meaning is that he would be no longer sensitive : temptation might assail him, his own merely human courage might give way ; and therefore there was a great pressure upon him, and he steeled his face. It is for want of this steeling of the face that so many of us never get to Jerusalem. We acknowledge that we want to be there, we are not unwilling to serve God and to do good ; but we come up to the occasion with unprotected or unprepared faces. We can be smitten, we can be thrown down, our will is not at its highest and best point. Understand that if we have anything grand and enduring to do in life, we shall need from time to time all our courage.

Why this steeling of the face beforehand? That is the only way to steel the face. You must put on the panoply before you go out to the war. We must not first fly to the battlefield and then say, "Where is the armour?" The longer notice we have the better, so that we may put on the whole panoply; put it on in privacy, in quietness, in composure of mind, and see that every part and particle of the armour is appropriated. Are you trusting to being able to extemporise answers to temptation? Do you suppose that you are so supremely able that without one moment's notice you may address yourself to the infernal power, or to human enemies, and overwhelm them all? Then you have no self-knowledge; you do not understand your own humanity. We must prepare when the enemy is not there to meet him when he does come. Preliminary preparation, courage, arrangement,—these must be well attended to if ever we are to get to the Jerusalem of our destiny.

Why did Christ thus steel his face? Because "the time was come." There is a ministry of time; there is a theology of moments; there is a great spiritual interpretation of crises. Everything great seems to come suddenly. We may know of it centuries beforehand, yet when it comes it comes as a thief in the night: so the Lord will come, so heaven will be opened, so the great harvest will be ordered to be gathered in. "The time was come that he should be received up." He had no doubt as to the motion, and its direction. We may so live as hardly to know whether we are going laterally or vertically—whether we are going up or whether we are going down; or we may so live as to have heaven in hand. Jesus Christ lived in the latter way; he knew that he was to be lifted up, received up, that he was to pass out of sight;

that the lifting up upon the cross was but preliminary to the higher lifting up into heaven itself. Therefore the bitterness of death was passed. We do not die when we die ; we die when we live so that we have overcome the power of death. There is no sweeter poetry, no lovelier description, than the words just quoted—"the bitterness of death is passed." Death has its bitterness : that bitterness must be encountered at one time or another ; better encounter it as long beforehand as possible, and get hold so strongly of heaven as not to know when the supreme moment actually occurs. Then shall death be a receiving-up, an ascension, a flying away to coronation and enthronement.

Yet though our Lord was on his way to Jerusalem, observe what he did: He "sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him." The foot of the ladder is upon the earth. There are always certain little and insignificant details to be attended to. All the way along the line Jesus Christ was the touchstone by which men were tried. He could not pass through a village without developing its character. When the magnet came near, all the steel filings were in motion ; when the great Healer came, disease felt his presence ; when the great Purifier drew near, all corruption gathered up itself against him, and raged mightily, but impotently. It should be so in some degree with every Christian soul ; wherever that Christian goes he should carry his moral atmosphere with him. It should be felt that foolish, impious, untrue, false speech cannot be tolerated in his presence—would be out of place, indeed, were he within earshot. He should repronounce the commandments, he should breathe again the beatitudes ; it should be

known that there is a messenger from the court of heaven present in the company. Some men will not receive Jesus for false reasons. When those reasons are known to be false, you can deal with the reasoners. With a flat, black, positive infidelity you can treat, argumentatively and morally ; but when the reasons are concealed, when they are concealed from the reasoners themselves, when men delude their own minds, hearts, and consciences into false assumptions, then it is almost impossible to get at the self-deceived heart.

In this case it is as if the people would have received him, but they see he is bent on Jerusalem. They will not hinder him, they will not stand in his way, they will allow him to proceed on his journey ; they will not detain him even by hospitality. To be hospitable under such circumstances, they reason, would be to be obstructive : this man is bent on Jerusalem, to Jerusalem let him go. Or they might be reasoning upon narrow, ethnic, and class lines ; they might be saying, " If he prefers Jerusalem, let him have it ; the Jews and the Samaritans have no dealings one with another ; if he had elected to come to Samaria we should have given him large hospitality. Once we received him ; when he worked that wonderful work upon the woman of Samaria we were glad to see him and listen to him, but the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans. He wants to make a mere convenience of us ; we will not submit to this treatment ; let him pass on." When men thus delude and bewilder their own minds and consciences, they put themselves away mile after mile from the central line and the central truth. Again and again let us exhort ourselves to be frank with our own consciences, and to have the courage to write ourselves down infidels and traitors, rather than to find momentary,

but useless, concealment under artifice and excuse and equivocation.

A natural impulse was excited in James and John, the sons of thunder. They said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" There are always men who want short ways to certain conclusions. They will leap over any intervening obstacle. They want to convert the world quickly, or to kill it off at once. They lack the divinity of patience; they know not the mystery and the meaning of longsuffering, endless forbearance. Men speak according to their quality. There is no mistaking men if you listen acutely to the very tone of their voice. Whenever an answer is made to a situation you can detect the quality of the speaker in a moment. Men especially reveal themselves when they speak off-handedly. Under impulse you see nature in its native quality and purpose. The disciples James and John were suddenly moved; they did not expect this inhospitality and resistance; in a moment, therefore, they struck fire. They would have commanded judgment from above, "as Elias did." But only men who had the quality of Elias should attempt the ministry of that mighty prophet of fire. Do not carry a mantle that is too big for you; do not assume a function that you cannot fulfil. "As Elias did": who can talk like the thunder, smite like the lightning, fly like the wind? These two disciples together did not make one Elias. Every man has his own function, his own particular work to do, and it is not for the men who come centuries after to take up his name to conjure with "As Elias did": these words are not in the best manuscripts. Perhaps, therefore the disciples did not use that great name; yet if they did use it, their use of it

points a moral. Little men must not employ the weapons of great men ; small minds must not adopt the policy of genius. We are not to sanctify errors, imperfections, infirmities of temper by quoting some illustrious instance in which temper gave way and impatience expressed itself in violence. This is a trick of man. If he can find in some remote anecdote that some illustrious person committed evil, he is glad to say, "as Abraham did," "as David did" ; or sometimes he may pervert the meaning of historical incidents, as in this particular case, and imagine that any man who is offended with the hostility of his age is at liberty to command fire from heaven to burn it, "as Elias did." Be sure that you know the circumstances before you adopt the principle. Be quite sure of your ground before you sanctify your action by illustrious names. By a misappropriation of such historical authorities and meaning you may dishonour the dead you meant to crown. Let us therefore, in all controversy in which the name of Christ is concerned, be very careful lest we call down fire without permission. There is no fiasco so lamentable and so humiliating as to call for fire when the fire is not ordered from above. Keep on solid ground, and you cannot fail.

The answer of Jesus shows he was the Messiah. Here again we have quality revealed : "But he turned and rebuked them." He called down fire upon them ; he burned them. That is what the Lord is always doing with controversialists who handle his cause amiss, with men who put a false aspect upon the kingdom of truth. He does not smite with avowed and ostentatious energy ; he burns with contempt and holy judgment the men who seek to patronise his crown. He has always done so. In this instance there was no affirmation of Christ's ability

to take care of himself ; he never adopted that low level of reasoning. Jesus Christ always went to the very highest point of argument and doctrine. Therefore he said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." Christ dealt with central truths. He was never misled by a mere accident or the detail of the moment ; whatever happened he instantly connected it with eternal truths and politics. Whenever he saw the little trickling rill he traced it to the fountain whence it issued. If we are living at the mercy of villagers who will not receive us, and of persons who form a poor opinion of our character and mission, we shall be troubled, we shall be daily irritated and embarrassed, foiled and disappointed. We must rule by the spirit, and not by momentary violence. The Church fails only when it loses its right grip of the whole content of the kingdom of God upon the earth. In this sense we do want more theology ; that is to say, we need a larger, clearer view of what the kingdom of God is : losing that view, we are the victims of momentary opposition ; we are irritated and hunted down by men whom we would not reckon among the dogs of our father's flock. We must get back to eternal principles ; we must live in the sanctuary, and not in the vestibule ; we must have hold of God, then our patience will be like his, inexhaustible, tender, piteous, hopeful.

On what did the Saviour rest? Hear his holy, tender words : "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." That was preaching to the disciples ; that was a sermon to the Church ; that was a discourse esoteric, going to the very centre of the central men, addressed to the very soul and conscience of those who ought to have been familiar with that sacred truth. Jesus Christ spake his severest things to the disciples, as

well as his gentlest things. He would not have men near him, supporting his kingdom and representing his cause, who were weak, ignorant, foolish, without constantly reminding them of their weakness and ignorance and folly, and without constantly offering them the enlightenment and the sustenance which they required. Would that some men would no longer defend Christ's kingdom ! It would be well for that kingdom if such men could turn unbelievers for the moment, postponing their conversion until the last minute, so that they could do no more mischief. We misrepresent Christ when we persecute men, when we injure them because of their opinions, when we are violent with men, when we disbelieve them in consequence of their conscientious convictions, when we visit them with penalties because they do not pray as we pray and where we pray. Men who do this kind of work are serving the devil and not the Saviour. How could Jesus speak such words under such circumstances ? Was there no sign of temper on his face ? Was there no impatience in his tone ? Not one particle or shadow or hint of either of them. He had fought the battle ; the Man who has thrown the devil and all his angels can afford to be at peace with meaner antagonists. When we have fought the fight in secret, when we have settled the controversy on our knees, then what little incidental opposition we meet with cannot disturb the peace imperturbable which reigns in the triumphant soul.

How much of this incident stands to-day ? Every whit of it. The incident is only eighteen hundred years old in a certain sense ; in another and broader sense it is the incident of this day. Christ is still urging his Church to great destinies, every holy man has his Jerusalem to go to. Every man must steel his face, harden it as with

adamant, if he would really succeed in the great journey of life. That journey is not to be undertaken by feeble men, flaccid, wanting in intensity of will, destitute of holy courage. The kingdom of God can only be taken by warriors whose faces are iron, whose fists are steel. There will still be opposition ; the city will not have you, the village will cast you out, the little hamlet will refuse you a bed, the lonely stranger by the roadside will be dumb when you ask him questions. We must be prepared for all this ; we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom. We say of the white-clothed ones before the throne, the sun does not smite them with his heat, but warms them with all his kindness, "These are they that came out of great tribulation ; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Strait is the gate that opens upon heaven ; narrow is the road, narrow as discipline can make it, that ends in perfectness of character.

The incident still lives also in the men who want curt ways, who would guillotine the men who do not believe in their mission, or burn them, or in some way put an end to their unhappy influence. The gospel doctrine is that men are to be converted, not destroyed ; enemies are to be subdued, they are not to be smitten with violence. What do we require, then ? Patience, forbearance, the very pity of Christ, the very spirit of the Cross. In thus treating other men we are educating ourselves. No man can be patient with another without adding another grace to his own character. We are educated by opposition, we are sanctified by antagonism, properly treated.

Here, then, stands the great opportunity. We are called to a holy destiny ; the way to the accomplishment of that destiny is hard, terrible ; lions are upon it, and ravenous

beasts prowl in the very midst of it. Every man must fight his way to the Jerusalem that is above. We shall do Christ's work best in Christ's spirit. Never let us forget that it is possible to do good in a wrong way ; possible to preach the gospel in a wrong tone ; possible to speak the very words of Christ without the music of his love.

Blessed Saviour ! This one incident should endear him to us more and more. His was not the short and burning way, his was not the policy of violence and destruction ; his was the policy of hope, love, forgiveness. That spirit he will carry to the Cross ; in the darkest of its gloom he will say, "Father, forgive them : for they know not what they do." This is the love of Christ that the Gospel reveals ; this is the love of the Cross that we are called upon to publish to the whole world. Let the whole world hear it, answer it ; then there shall be no more rioting and storm and suffering ; the old earth shall become young again, her deserts shall be gardens, and her wildernesses shall blossom as the rose, and the poor old prodigal earth shall be taken back into the family of the stars ; it shall shine there, going out no more for ever. Our hope is in thee, thou crucified, triumphant Christ !

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, help us every one to praise thee. Thou alone canst give the spirit of praise to the human heart, and cause the human voice to be lifted up in grateful song. Thou dost teach the heart ; out of the abundance of the thought the mouth speaketh and the tongue singeth and the whole man expresses his best desire. Renew our hearts. Send into our hearts the spirit of grace and love and light and all that is high and heavenly, then we shall be silent no longer ; we shall stand up and praise the Lord loudly and sweetly, saying, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." May our praise be unanimous ; may all that is in us praise the Lord ; may there be no silent faculty ; may our understanding and our heart, our imagination and our conscience, our will and our whole nature, combine in one sacrifice of praise. May our whole lives be musical ; may we always remember that we are singing God's praises so that others may hear us, and if our voice be not clear, how shall they know that it is the praises of the Lord that we are singing ? May we sing with the whole man, that every one in our circle may know that we have given our hearts to the Christ ; yet not we, but Christ drew us with the bonds of love, he drew us to his Cross that he might save us. We love him because he first loved us, yea, he loved us and gave himself for us,—the very agony and the very mystery of love which our poor minds in this narrow scene cannot comprehend ; the love of love, the eternal affection, the divine agony. Help us to believe in the Lord Jesus with our whole heart ; then there shall be no burden, no cloud hanging over our life, no grave, no death ; we shall already be in heaven's lofty rapture. Now thou art teaching us and training us in many ways. All thy training is good, though some of it is painful. Thou wilt not give us our own way, blessed be thy name ; if thou hadst answered our prayers we had been our own ; listen to them, for it does our hearts good to tell thee all they feel ; but when we have outpoured our heart do thou answer us not according to our words, but according to divine wisdom and love. Some are weary of life, some know not why they were born, some have come to see and feel

life's monotony; they are tired of the endless revolution, the days bring no new life, and the nights bring no new spirit of rest; they would escape, fly away to other mornings and to other opportunities. Lay thy hand upon them, lest they lay their hand upon themselves; save them from despair, show them that they might see more if they looked more, teach them that thou art very near, and that all thy way is a mystery of love. Some are full of self-indulgence and self-delight and self-idolatry; their houses have thick walls, and on the walls are many pictures, and every corner is well lighted, and the table groans under the feast, and the voice of true prayer is never heard under the godless roof. If thou canst, have mercy upon such; we leave them in thine hands. Others have broken all the commandments, and to-night their hearts are sore with grief. They come repentantly: is there a second opportunity for man who has shattered all thy law? So long as the Cross stands we believe there is: where sin abounds grace doth much more abound. May the Cross always be in the view of those who are groping after God and yet are afraid to look up because their faces burn with shame. Some are thinking of little ones at home, the little ones that are ill, and the children that are away at school and college; the hearts of others are on the sea, because they whom they love much are there, and their prayer is that they may be saved and brought to their desired haven. The Lord give us all to feel how near he is; may grey hairs be a diadem, may youthful energy be a sacrifice, and may painful want inspire and create its own petition to heaven, and may the Lord send upon us a plentiful rain of blessing. Amen.

### III.

## THE MULTITUDINOUS MINISTRY.

"David. . . played before the Lord on all manner of instruments."—  
2 Samuel vi. 5.

**T**HIS is what the Church can never be made to understand. The Church will not have it. The Church will read it historically, and admire it; it will not yield to its spirit, its genius, and say, "Yes, that is right, and that is the only right way, and until we come

to that we shall have no real expression of Christian confidence and Christian love." You cannot drive a man out of himself. Here and there is a great broad soul that takes in everybody else, but the vast majority of men can never be made other than they are. They see nothing that is two inches off; they cannot take in a second idea. They cannot. I should not mind that so much but for their scourging tongues; they are so fierce with the man who can take in more than one idea. Hence we have accusation and charge and suspicion and innuendo, and all the progeny of evil-thinking and vicious criticism. The very fact that they cannot take in a second idea wholly removes them from the region of profitable judgment. They do not know what men are talking about even when they are rebuking them. They think the rebuke must apply to somebody else; it never occurs to any living soul to say, "I am the fool he is talking about: I know it, I am ashamed of myself; God help me to take in all the angels, and entertain them with the hospitality of love."

"David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on all manner of instruments." The instruments were a thousand in number, but the tune was one. That is the point. Every man is willing to play upon his own instrument of music if he can play his own tune. What a shout there would be, what noise upon noise; what vehemence and tumult, what uproar and thunder and confusion! The difficulty is to have diversity in unity; the great difficulty is so to play upon all manner of instruments as to make only one instrument of the whole, so that the effect shall be as if one many-voiced instrument were offering all the praise. There are some persons in some places (names utterly unknown to me, blessed be

Providence) who object to all instruments. I never lived with such people—I do not want to live with them. I would line the Church with instruments ; I would have every pillar in the Church a musical instrument ; I would have every piece of timber in the Church with a musical tongue in it ; and I would have the Church so alive with music that people must come to it, and in coming through that apparently secondary motive, they might learn that there is no instrument known to the imagination of man that can touch the human tongue—that human voice—for variety and pathos, for nobleness and tender sympathy. God made the voice, man made the instrument : let them go together, let them be helpers of one another ; but let us keep steadfastly before the mind this truth : that God's conception of things, so far as we are able to discern it, is that there shall be multitudinousness in unity—ten thousand waves, but one sea.

All that is but prefatory to a large conception, which is, that the Cross of Christ, which symbolises our highest and tenderest thought, requires the service and makes room for the service of all manner of faculties. Let us leave the illustration of instruments, and go to the higher truth, to the other point, and call in to Christ's service and worship all manner of faculties. The Church will not have this. The Church is a great brickmaker. The Church believes in moulds and forms and definite shapes. The Church believes in regularity. The Church folds its hands and uplifts its eyes in token of doing homage to the idol of Monotony. Imagine the picture: all manner of faculties being devoted to the service of Christ. Here is one man eloquent—listen to him ; here is another man who has no eloquence, but he gives with both hands : look at him, how he serves the Lord ! Here is another

man who has no eloquence and no money, but how wise he is—what a gift of sagacity God has entrusted him with ! Where other men see a mile, he sees ten miles. Can we do without any one of these men ? Not in the Church ; we want them all. The difficulty is that the one man will criticise the other, and not make room for him. Eloquence should say to liberality, “ I love you,” and liberality should say to eloquence, “ I love you ;” and eloquence and liberality should say to wisdom, “ We cannot do without you : now, altogether, praise the Lord ! ” Then we have the 150th Psalm embodied, incarnated, in its highest suggestion and utility. If you announce that an extremely learned man will occupy the pulpit you will empty the pews. The Church, as represented by the million—to put it delicately, let us say the ochlocracy, because that will not be so widely understood—does not care for these dry-as-dusts. You hear a man who has spent his nights and days in deciphering the old scrolls and manuscripts with which the divine revelation was originally entrusted, and you leave him. Yet you talk about wanting all manner of instruments. You do not ! You hear of a man who is emotional, you call him sentimental, anecdotal, a good deal adapted to meet the necessities of women and children and infirm persons : yet you talk about wanting all manner of instruments. No. You have your favourite flute and fiddle, but, as to “ all manner of instruments,” instead of giving them welcome you accord them bitter criticism. Now we want learning and emotion and sympathy, and it takes them all to make but one. No family is complete till the youngest child is there—nay, until the prodigal is home ; it is hardly complete until the sainted one comes down in white outline. We need all to make one. All men make up God’s true Adam. You must not think of Adam as one man, needing one suit of clothes, and

measured geometrically. When God made Man he made every man, and until the last poorest and meanest soul is brought right up into Heaven's atmosphere and Christ's sympathy, something is wanting to the perfectness of humanity according to the conception of God. The harp must not be silent because the cornet will not play. But that is the way with the harp. We have got into that trick in the Church ; we will only give if somebody else will give. The harp says, "No, no ; if the cornet will play I will join." Silly harp, vicious harp, wicked harp ! What you have to do is to say, "I am ready, Lord ; if I have to be played alone I am here, let thy fingers strike me and I will do what I can : I should like to be part of a great orchestra, but if no other instrument will praise thee, here am I, use me." If the harp cannot have company it must offer its own tribute. We must have different ways of working, then ; and we must have patience and sympathy with one another in our different ways of working. To see that there is somebody else in the world but himself will do any man good ; to see how other people look at things is itself an education ; to make room for all is God's idea of Christian hospitality. Christ drew all men unto him, and we must learn what we can of his method. There are churches that are perhaps more conspicuous for dignity than anything else. Even dignity ought not to be unhoused or driven away from Christ's feast. I know it may not be true dignity, it may only be stiffness, it may only be a species of *gaucherie*, it may not be the real, imperial, princely dignity ; still, we must not thrust it out upon the frosty pavement to die of cold. There are some persons that can only live in dignity ; there are some persons who cannot sit down easily—they must be recognised and provided for. There are others who are all enthusiasm, and the dignified people say,

"Froth ! foam ! always on the rattle!" That is how we do in the Christian band. The instruments fall foul of one another, and such murder they make of God's music ! There are some who like simplicity in works ; let them have it ; they have as much title to their charge as we have. Work in some way, work in your own way, be faithful to your own individuality ; only see that you are playing the heavenly music, and seeking to increase the volume of the heavenly song. With such a motive the most awkward may be brought into harmony and into line.

See what a ministry Christ's was ! Of course, that ministry was unique and inimitable, but we ought to set our faces in that direction, saying constantly and gratefully, Christ's method was the right one, and Christ's method was as multitudinous as humanity. Shall we hear him to-day ? listen ! he is speaking parables all day, he is setting forth human history in the mirror of a parable. What an artist he is ! what an eye for form and colour ! what a delicate, swift touch ! touching things into newness of shape and beauty, and transfiguring everything his finger is laid upon. Shall we hear him to-morrow ? Not a parable doth he speak. To-day is given up to miracle. From sunrise to sundown he will make a path for himself through asylum and hospital and place devoted to impotent folk, and at night he will leave behind him a line of light,—the lame will leap, and the dumb will sing, and the deaf will ask for more and more of the music of the speech of human love, and those who have not been out for many a day will gather themselves up that to-morrow they may see the summer, and enjoy God's banquet of flower and fruit and light and music. Shall we hear him on the day following ? Not a parable, not a miracle ; but listen to

him : what doctrine, what philosophy, what a conception of life ! He offers men rest. O thou Son of God, thou couldst not have offered us anything we need so much. " Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—eternal cloudless Sabbath. Hear him : " Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. Let your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven. I am the vine, ye are the branches. Abide in me. Take my body, eat it ; take my blood, drink it." Not a parable, not a miracle, but a doctrine. Then into what mystery he passes ! Who can follow him in his apocalyptic ranges ? Men turn away from one another and say, " How can these things be ? Let this man give us his best meaning ; what does he mean ? Ask him. Thou sayest, We know the way ; how can we know the way ? We know not whither thou goest, how can we know the way then ? Show us the Father." And he talks as the firmament might talk, in whose great mouth all the stars struggle for utterance. Who can follow him now ? so simple a day or two ago, so profound to-day ; now plucking a daisy and giving it to a child, now rifling the heavens, for all the stars are his. That is the ministry—the multitudinous, the many-faced ministry ; that is the ministry, with its four-fold aspect of lion and eagle and cherub and man. That ministry we cannot find now in any solitary instance, but the totalised ministry of the Cross would in some dim shadow set forth that conception of variety, multitudinousness, and universality.

" All manner of instruments made of fir wood"—harps psalteries, timbrels, cornets, cymbals. God claims all.

The very weakest voice in all creation belongs to God's orchestra. Human critics are very sharp with us, principally to show their own greatness. They will not tolerate our voices. God will : it is better to fall into the hands of God than into the hands of men. God claims all : he wants your little voice, sweet child, he wants your thrilling soprano, and your deep bass, and all the parts between and round about, every degree of utterance, every variety of expression. Hath not God made us every one, and shall the one despise the other? and shall the hand say to the foot, I have no need of thee? and shall the eye say to the ear, I have no need of thee? and shall there thus be schism in the body? Shall we not rather say, Here is a new form, a new way, a new conception, a new power ; make room, enlarge the orchestra? God claims all ; Christ is worthy of all. You must not be silent when God's praise is sung ; if you cannot sing it artistically and rhythmically, you can hum it, you can sob it, you can in some way take your part and share in it ; or, if you cannot do so vocally, you can do so spiritually, for there is a spiritual singing, there is a sympathetic music, there is a way of taking part in a song without adding to its mere volume of sound ; but oh, brethren, in some way have a share in this great sacrifice of praise!

One day all manner of instruments, faculties, voices, and powers will be given to Christ. Then what a theology we shall have ! Every nation will have its own theological forms. Depend upon it, Africa and India will never agree upon a theological creed. Western and eastern intellects take different views, occupy different standpoints, and move through different orbits and ranges. Yet the whole belong to God. The same thing may be said in a thousand

different ways. The one lesson to be learned, and to be enforced is this ; there are all manner of musical instruments, but only one tune. The Cross makes room for all. A wondrous feast is Christ's ; the king and the peasant sit together, the old man and the little child are there, neither taking up the other's room. Any soul that desires to be good may be welcomed to that feast. Let us hear, then, God's call to us every one to join the song, at some point, as you can ; improve upon your position and opportunity day by day, and remember that it requires all to make up one. If a man shall sedulously introduce discord into divine music, he must be expelled until he learn better morality. But if the learner is trying to do his best and is yet making mistakes, he must be kept inside, not for the sake of his mistakes, but for the sake of his spirit. And know this, that the greater the man the more patient the critic, the greater the soul the larger is the utterance of his judgment. He does not need to be expelling people in order to show his own peculiar virtue and excellence. Because he is so vast he can afford to retain the worst that wants to be retained. If any poor soul should say to him, "Oh, sir, mine is a poor instrument and a broken song, but I do want to stop if you will allow me !" will he open the door to expel that struggling soul ? Not he ! he will say, "Poor child ! once I was just as weak as you are ; stop where you are, cling to the very walls of the sanctuary ; Christ, your Christ, my Christ, is mighty to save. Others are mighty to destroy, but the uniqueness of Christ is found in this, that he can put pieces together that no hand can ever unite. Out of the worst of us he can make the brightest of his saints."

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, thou canst give light in darkness ; thou canst find us in the wilderness and in rocky places ; there thou canst find for us an abundance of water, and we shall gather honey from the rock. Oh, that we could rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him, and leave our life wholly in his hand and care ! Then should our sleep be sweet, and we should lie down and be at rest, and no foe should be at our door. Thou knowest our impatience and our ignorance, and how it is that we take our life into our own hands : so foolish are we before God ! not knowing that the plan is in heaven, and that thy whole scheme and purpose are from eternity and not from yesterday. If we could accept thy will and thy sovereignty, and rest wholly in thee by the power of divinely-created faith, we should already be where the angels are. We have imprisoned ourselves, we have turned the key of care ; we have limited ourselves by our anxieties, we have allowed our sins to outrun our souls, so that our souls are trembling and in great fear, when they ought to be far away on the shining horizon overlooking the jasper walls of heaven. Thou didst mean us to occupy high places ; thou hast made us in Christ the children of the mountains, and not children of the damp, dark valleys : yet behold us, how lowly in estate, and how poor in inheritance, when we might have owned all heaven. God pity us ; we are fools and criminals to ourselves as well as towards heaven ; teach us that we have not only sinned against heaven and in thy sight, but we have sinned against ourselves, and are no more worthy to be called men, and are ashamed to company with the beasts lest we bring them to dishonour. The Lord pity us, as he has done ; lead us every day to the redeeming Cross ; point us to the Second Adam in whom we have immortality, because we have redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of sins. Thou hast been mindful of us ; thou wouldest not let us die without thou didst lift upon us the light of the Cross. We come to the holy altar, we bow down before it in shame, yet not in fear, because the Cross is the symbol of hope. Thou knowest what we all need ; send none unblessed, uncheered away ; let every soul feel that this is the house

of the Father, this is the vicinage of heaven. May we be lifted up above all cloud and care and fear, and be brought for one little shining moment into the spirit of rest and light ; then we shall go back to the world to fight its poor battles and accept its rugged discipline with hearts that have been cheered by the hospitality of heaven. Thou knowest the wolves that are tearing our souls ; thou knowest that the name of our enemies within us is Legion. They assail us at every point, they lie in wait for us, they study our strength and our weakness, and if for one small moment we forget ourselves, behold they come down upon us with cruel and destructive power. The Lord help us to bear temptation and assault with spiritual fortitude, with sweet and filial confidence in the issue of human training. Look upon our homes, and make them centres of gladness ; kindle the fire with thine own hands, and it shall never go out ; may we find sleep and rest when we need them most. We bless thee for sleep, for a moment's forgetfulness, that we may come back to all our best memories and resume our noblest tasks with access of strength. Thou knowest our business, our toil, our care ; thou knowest how we befool ourselves before thee in wanting more than we can really enjoy ; this is atheism, this is blasphemy against thy love. Hast thou not pledged us our bread ? Hast thou not written with thine own finger that our water shall be sure ? Yet all the while we have God on our tongue and the devil in our hearts. We throw ourselves upon thy mercy ; if thy pity fail us we are dead men ; but the tears of God will never cease, until the last wanderer is at home. Amen.

#### IV.

### HIGH PLACES.

“The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.”—HAB. iii. 19.

THERE are many persons, unknown to fame, not mentioned in the records of those who have given great verdicts on great subjects, who know by some revelation, not from heaven, what prayer ought to be. They are the vexation of the Church. Let us go to the Bible examples themselves when we really want to know

what prayer is in all its scope and emphasis and feeling. Who can read this prayer of Habakkuk the prophet? In the mere matter of articulation, it is about the third most difficult chapter I ever read aloud. The fortieth chapter of Isaiah must always be the most difficult; it is like walking over mountains that lie a mile apart, and you can only touch their tops. This Habakkuk-cry to God is nearly as hard to read.

What is the man talking about? He is in prayer, and he says, "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise, and his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power." Is this prayer? If Habakkuk had lived now, he would have been told that this is not the modern idea of supplication. "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet." He would have been told that this is rather preaching than praying. "He stood, and measured the earth; he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting." He would have been told that this is rhetoric rather than devotion. "I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction, and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble." The modern ear would have turned away from him at this point, and have taken up with milder terms. The modern listener likes tepid piety. Habakkuk was a prophet, not a mendicant. Habakkuk revelled in the riches of God, and in enumerating them seemed to possess them. There is a way of so talking about the landscape as to own it. The land is assigned, conveyed; many men make a handsome living out of "conveying" land, but they never convey the landscape,

which is the only thing worth having, and that will endure for ever and ever as a picture graven on the soul. "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation : at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear." How far away from prayer! would some man say now. Yet Habakkuk is in the very mystery of it. When he does speak more prosaically there will be about his prose a flavour of poetry ; when he does come out of this rapture and begin to talk to us in the language of every day, it will be the language of earth spoken with the accent of heaven. How does he come out of this great ecstasy ? With these words :—"Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." Any man who can come out of rapture with such a decision, and such a confidence, must have been in prayer ; he must have been lost in God, he must have been swallowed up in devotion. Let us judge of our prayers by their practical Amen. If when we arise from our knees we want to show our faith in the very face of what are called contrary providences, be sure we have been in prayer. If we rise from our knees sweeter in temper, larger in forgiveness, brighter in general hope, no matter what the hearers may say about our rhetoric and our preaching in prayer, we have seen God face to face. We want less criticism, and more piety. Habakkuk betakes himself to high places, and will not come down. He tells his "chief singer" to put all this to music. He makes the words, and the chief singer, on his stringed instruments, must find the fitting notes. It is not always that the musician writes the words ; it is not always that the poet writes the music : the men

belong to one another ; this is the noble co-operation of Christian brotherhood and Christian service. The words are as good as the music, the music is fit for the words, they belong to one another ; and what God hath joined together let no man put asunder.

The object of true religion is to create exultation ; in other words the object of true religion is to get the soul up to high places. Soul, what dost thou in the dark valley ? this is no place for thee ; the mountains were made for souls, there upon the tops of the hills that first catch the morning ray is the sanctuary of the spirit. True religion is nothing if it does not often rise into rapture, ecstasy, and a species of madness. The temperature of the soul is soon cooled. This is a bright warm summer day, and yet what is this chill that comes upon us now and then ? There is a biting wind in these summer breezes ; did you not feel it a moment ago ? Wait, there it is again ; a sting of cold. What is it ? Is it in the day ? No, the day is all summer as to warmth and light, but eight miles off there is an iceberg, and through the eight miles of distance that mountain of ice sends its chilling message. It is even so with the culture of the soul, and the progress of the mind towards heaven. We are often in rapture, and men do not understand us. We go mad with purest joy. We are intoxicated with the wine of heaven, and people say, "They are beside themselves, they are drunken, they are fanatical." The soul being too sensitive to discouragement drops, so to say, in temperature, and that which an hour ago was hot is sensibly and visibly lower. O ye icebergs, ye be doing a chilling work in the Church !

High places are our proper goal if we are truly in sympathy with divine purpose. Nothing can hunt us down ; we cannot be gloomed and discouraged and

plunged into dejection. If it were so, it were so but for a moment ; we return to great principles, we betake ourselves, it may be with lingering footsteps, yet surely, to the sanctuary of old confidences and old persuasions ; then we say, After all, this rough old world is going home ; the course is devious, the storm is right in its teeth, all the demons seem to be let loose to hinder it in its course, and yet standing on these high places we see that the rough old world, once nearly turned into a hell, will be saved. These are moments of transfiguration, seasons of personal rapture of soul. We must always take the prophet at his best. Not what he says when he has muffled his mantle round his mouth and half-choked himself, but when he is away with his singing robes upon him, when all the outer air is at his disposal, then we must take down with lightning fingers every word he says, every note he utters, and that must be our revelation. The prophet is not then himself in the narrow sense, but himself in the sanctuary and shrine of God.

If we do not go to high places we shall lose much that is most beautiful and most blessed ; we shall have a wrong estimate of things, our standards will be false, our balances will be vicious, our whole outlook will be narrow and gloomy and disappointing. We must get to high places if we would see things as they really are. What can a man see in the valley ? The valley was not made for sight, it is not a specular tower, it is only the place of graves, the place to lie down in, and not to stand in. We do not know the world till we get upon the high places. You remember the poor man who for the first time in his life was taken out to a holiday excursion, and was sailing among the Kyles of Bute ; turning to his friend he said, "Ay, but it is a bonny world when we see it all !" He

thought that the Kyles of Bute were the world. So they were to him ; the man is perfectly right in his higher interpretations. But if we would see it all we must be upon high places, then things fall into their right perspective, and take on them their right colour, and stand up in their divine proportions. We then see that the earth in every nook and corner is a measured quantity, that the man of God has gone forth with the measuring rod in his hand, and has set everything in its place, and has given everything its own poetical and significant proportion. Until we get upon high places, or look to them, we shall make false estimates of everything round about us. We think the express train is flying ; so it is, when we look at the poor horse on the turnpike, dragging its load of stones or its load of corn ; then the express train flies, we do not hesitate to use the word "flying" in giving distinction to some trains. Now look at the high places ; what is the express train doing now? Nothing ; fussing itself about nothing, making more noise than progress. Look away at the white star ; is the express train flying past it? It can never overtake that greater engine. Unless we have these true measurements, these abiding and divine standards, we cannot properly reckon what is going on around us. A man may think himself of great consequence ; so he is within limited lines ; he dies ; the earth says, Let him have his grave, every man is entitled to that, but do not let us stop the earth until the grave is dug. We have to bury our dead in a flying globe. We think our concerns very important, so important that we become anxious about them ; sometimes, indeed, we become sleepless ; oftentimes we draw our poor hand across our aching brow, and wonder what will come next. What matter? Who cares what comes next if he be rooted in God? Suppose you should be all broken up to-morrow and sold, and driven

away into poverty ; it may be the best thing for you, it may be the making of you. Judged within narrow limits, it is an awful discipline, and your friends will probably call upon you as seldom as possible ; but viewed in relation to high places and great issues and heavenly horizons, what matters what bank goes down, or what crisis of a merely material kind supervenes ? The universe is not agitated—only the city ; and man made the city ; whatever man makes can be all shaken to pieces. The things not made with hands, the high places, should be our sanctuaries, our standards of measurement. “ Oh, rest in the Lord,” saith one of old, and the ages will not let his great voice die, “ Oh, rest in the Lord ” : be sure about that, be right there ; and “ although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls ; ” yet even in that bleak wilderness I will find stones enough for an altar.

Communion with God is guaranteed by high places. We must not take up little questions to lofty summits. We must say to all such questions, “ Stand ye here as far down as possible, whilst I go up and worship yonder.” It is always “ up ” to the metropolis, it is always “ up ” to London, come from what point you may ; it is always “ up ” to the university, the metropolis of learning ; it is always “ up ” to the house of God, though it be miles down in a valley ; that is a going down which in its spiritual significance means going up. You cannot go down to the house of God, although the road be one long many-miled descent. So when we have true communion with God, we are upon high places. All God’s appointments seem to be on the mountains. He said to Moses, Meet me early in the mount. Once Moses was seen alone and going up

the hill of God. He had an appointment there which would take him forty days to complete. On Tabor was the shining of the true personality of Christ, the white radiance which made his clothes whiter than snow, brighter than noontide. Oh, hast thou been on the mountain, poor soul? hast thou been intoxicated with the rarified air? Intoxication of this kind is the true religion. Be not filled with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the spirit divine, eternal, and in that intoxication find the beginning and the pledge of heaven.

The mountain is not to be ascended all at once. We have to walk up the mountain, not fly. Sometimes the mountain-path is very rough walking ; some days I slide down more than I go up ; enough if I am still on the hillside and still looking towards the place where I want to be ; to look may itself be an accomplished journey. God comes down the mountain not to tarry with us but to take us up. He knows how far we can walk in the day ; he gathereth the lambs in his bosom ; he gently leads his flock. He makes the mountain shorter by coming down one half of the road, and one touch of his hands makes us strong to go up all the rest of the way.

The "hinds' feet" signify agility, ability to climb, delight in climbing. Poor man is often mocked by the hind or the goat. He comes home from his Swiss holiday, which he declares to have enjoyed, and he tells us that he climbed two thousand feet, and two thousand more, and was very near doing something in addition to that, but did not do it. But he always forgets to tell that fifty feet above him there was a mountain goat, shaking its shaggy beard at him in mockery and disdain and in mute laughter ; he omits the goat. Habakkuk says, "There shall be no goats higher than I could get ; I shall outrun the hind,

whatever be these mountain creatures that travel up to icy pinnacles, I shall be above them." Man shall be the highest creature in God's creation. There is a danger that a mountaineer be nothing but a mountaineer. There is certainly a danger that a man is so fond of an ice-pick that he never cuts a slice of bread for his poor child at home. There are some such climbers that never come within the region of practical service. I do not call that going to high places. I call that waste of life, verily building castles in the air. That only is high life that comes down to do the daily toil with a new strength and a new gladness. We can never excel in poetic description the fact that is given in the Gospels that when the Tabor sight was over, when the Transfiguration scene closed, the Master came down, and down, and down, and found at the base of the mountain a poor father with his lunatic child. How long would Christ have stayed on Tabor's height but for that constraining father and the lunatic? They brought him down—they brought him down from heaven in the first instance, they brought him down from the mountain-peak every day.

We shall know that we have been on high places when we are more spiritual. The thing that has now been lost is spirituality, and that is dead gone out of the world, except in a few instances that can be counted. There is little spirituality in the Church. The first men to disbelieve spiritual truths are Christian ministers. They are the most stupid and impenetrable sceptics on the face of the earth. As long as you talk to them about theology they are all alive, as much as such dead wood can be ; but when you speak about the spiritual, the presences invisible, and when you speak about them being the only realities, their smile is a sin against the Holy Ghost.

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, if we sing of thy mercy in Christ Jesus, our song will be new every morning. Thou dost surprise us by thy love ; its constancy does not become familiar. Behold, the shining of the sun is a continual wonder to the wise. Give us ears to hear, and eyes to see, and hearts to understand ; then we shall never be sad, our pain shall be wrought into our song as a new quality. Thou knowest that we live in a strange land, but it will make our home the sweeter when we see it. Help us along all the weary road ; when it is over we shall think it short, but in the stepping of it how weary it is ! Yet now and then we see patches of gardenland, and something in our heart says, by and by it will be all like this, as green and flowery and beautiful. So, because of that voice within us, which is the voice of thy Spirit, we take heart again and go the next mile, and sit down, saying we are so much nearer home. But the wilderness is full of stones, the path is rugged and winding, and there are ravenous beasts upon the road, and we are now and again threatened by great fears. Yet all the while we know that we are not alone ; Jesus himself draws nigh and walks with us, and asks us about our tears and our sorrow and our wonder ; then all is morning, all is music, all is peace. Meanwhile, thou wilt comfort us by thy grace, we shall see a great light on the far horizon ; it is, indeed, a long way off, but it may come quite suddenly ; the air is full of sadness, the air is full of farewell, the whole land reels because of fear. Yet in the midst of it we say to one another, "There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God" : then we wonder about the river, and we hear gospels concerning it, and now and then we think we hear somewhat of the soft roll of its deep waters. The Lord help us amidst all this meditation and contemplation to be faithful to immediate duty ; may we conquer death by life, may we overcome weariness by service, may we be heroic and not despondent. Yet "thou knowest our frame, thou rememberest that we are dust ;" thou knowest that our grave is under our feet, and that heaven is high above our heads ; thou wilt not chastise us severely because we sometimes

moan before God; it is our weakness. Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and when thou hearest, Lord, forgive! We still bless thee for the Cross, because the Cross is still standing there; the brightest image before our eyes, the loveliest object on all the fields of nature; it is God's answer to human sin. We cannot understand its mystery of righteousness and law and mercy and tears, but we know that we are kings by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by none other. Thou dost conquer death by life; thou dost not wash us in the water, but in the red stream of the chosen blood. May we understand the meaning of this, not in words, but in feeling, in joyous and triumphant experience; thus may we come into close and often wordless fellowship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. Fill us with a sense of awe; may all our qualities be chastened by our veneration; every morning when we awake may we say concerning this lower world, where the dawn and twilight are grey, "Lo, this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Amen.

## V.

## UNWELCOME WORDS DISUSED.

"Sorrow and sighing shall flee away."—ISAIAH xxxv. 10.

THERE are some words we want to get rid of. Turn to your lexicon, and you will find here and there when a word is explained that it is marked as obsolete: used no more; nailed to the counter as an old waste thing; given up by civilisation; cast out because no longer wanted. The time will come when in the new language you will not even find the words "sorrow and sighing." If you search for them they shall not be found. What has become of them? They have fled away. So doth this book of God always talk of the full summer time—great, high, ever-shining Heaven. It is always singing to us of some-

thing unimaginable, beautiful, ineffable, tender, that shall come and that may come at any moment: Aaron's rod bloomed with blossoms in one night.

How much there is in this description of negative statement! . No lion, no ravenous beast, no unclean soul. Conceive a state of mind in which there shall be no ravenous beast. Think of it a moment. The mind is at present full of lions and ravenous beasts, and we know it ; things made of fire, beasts that are all teeth, hungry things, the cry of each—Give, give ! The mind is as a cage of unclean birds ; the heart is as a chamber of imagery seen by the prophet Ezekiel, who could read the hieroglyphics upon the hidden walls, and find hell six feet in the earth. Conceive a state of mind in which there shall be no ravenous beast, no unclean thing ; all the guests white-clothed angels—singing ones—glad children of a glad country. That is an expectation you may cherish as men might cherish treasure richer than gold. Conceive of a place where there is no ravenous beast. That is how heaven is described. Even the finest imagination in its most ardent glow, hot with the very heat of heaven, must needs resort to negatives in order to give us something like a complete idea of the homeland. What saith he ? No night, no sea, no need of the sun. Thus we are helped towards realisation of facts ; thus by a process of exhaustion we get at the real and abiding quantity. How often we have to adopt this course in human reasoning and in human investigation ! First of all, out of the proposition we must eject all the false assumptions, and little by little we must come to the central and simple truth. Heaven could not be described by positive terms without the assistance of negations. Tell a child what heaven is in terms that are positive, and that child will be lost in

wonder ; he would be bewildered, and would receive little, if any, edification from the wordy description ; but begin by telling him that there will be no pain, no lion, no night, no troubled sea, no darkness, neither shall the inhabitants ever say, " I am sick." The child can thus grope its way little by little, at least, into a reverent wonder as to what such a land may be.

Suppose we were all to employ ourselves in weeding the language of all the words we do not want. Let us now go a-weeding. What words shall we dismiss ? There are hateful terms in our mother-tongue ; let us go forth and see what we can do towards assisting the incoming of the time of their disuse and absolute oblivion. What words shall we take away ? " Sorrow and sighing"—shall they remain ? Better strike them out ; the language is so much nearer music. At present we are simply weeding, striking out, getting rid of, theoretically, and we have done much by getting rid of the words " sorrow and sighing." They were never friends of ours ; we never saw them that we really loved them. Even they have some times left blessings behind them, but in themselves what is sorrow but pain ? what is sighing but the dull music of melancholy ? It is something to have got rid of the two terms sorrow and sighing. We should like to get rid of the word " pain." It is a word no one cares for ; we might banish that term without any one regretting its disappearance. Would any man say, " Spare the word ' pain ' ; we must not disuse such a term ; allow it to remain —it is musical, it is tuneful, it is tender, it is full of memories we would not willingly let die : whatever word you take out of the mother-tongue do not take the word pain " ? Pain has no friends ; no man will vote for the retention of pain in the language if we can legitimately

get rid of it. No one would say, "Lack-a-day ! on time of woe ! pain is struck out of our mother-tongue ; the old sweet, tender note is dropped out of life's tragic anthem." The word pain has no voter—no man stands up and votes for its retention ; the whole heart of the world says, " If you can get rid of pain legitimately, get rid of it at once." Shall the word "fear" stand ? It is but a syllable, like the word pain. It means cloud, threatening, a spirit of dread and apprehension ; it expresses a mood of soul which is continually assuring itself that the next moment will be the last, that the next dawn will bring with it all fear and darkness and judgment and overwhelming distress. Who says, " Let the word 'fear' stand "? Not a man. We cannot get through without it ; yet there is not a man who would not gladly dismiss it if he could. How these black guests are going !—sorrow and sighing, and pain and fear. Shall we recall them ? They go away unblessed, leaving space for brighter spirits ; there shall be no vacancy in the language—the very absence of pain means the presence of another quality and instrument in our education. We can do with all the room ; God will find light enough to fill all the vacated space. I should like to get rid of the word "farewell." There is nothing in it of joy. Some farewells are so long. There is no to-morrow in them. There is some far-off, unmeasured time to which the soul clings in joyous anticipation, but we want only the farewell that touches a very early hour to-morrow ; then we might accept it, we might regard it as a useful necessity ; we could at all events surmise or fancy reasons why it should be : but it is that farewell that goes over the second day, and the third, and over the next twenty years, and the following century, until we almost forgot our calculation as to when it began ; there is dimness in the past, there is shadow in the future—we hear, as it

were, the ghost of the tone that made all the heaven to us so empty ; and we have no assurance as to date when the sense of absence and solitude shall be taken away from the stricken heart. Who votes that farewell shall be part of his mother-tongue ? Not a soul.

Suppose that we have succeeded so far, what have we done ? Nothing. Here I must with almost ruthless hand touch the most practical fallacy in education. We went a-weeding—ay, and only that ! We should have gone upon another business. Behold this man, and gather lessons from his wasted patience and service. He has gone to weed his garden ; he knows there are several plants that ought to be absent. He says he will away with them. Watch him : he plucks off their heads, he puts them into his basket : he will spare none of them ; having collected all the noxious weeds, he says, I will make an end of you ; he takes them to the hottest fire and throws them into the midst of it, and congratulates, himself that all these noxious weeds are dead. What a, fool the man is ! What has he done ? Nothing. What ought he to have done ? He ought to have eradicated them. The youngest child ought to know the meaning of that long word. It means that he ought to have thrust down some iron instrument, if he could lay hold of one and tear up the very root, and turn them upside down, and shake the mould of them, and then take them to the fire and burn them ; then he has done something. Let us have no more weeding ; let us have eradication, root-finding root-loosening, root-burning. That is the true education. Why should we go into details and say we must get rid of sorrow, sighing, pain, fear, death ? All that detail can be spared ; all these words grow upon one stem : let us go for that ! What is its name ? SIN. The name never changes :

wrong-spiritedness, wrong behaviour, springing out of a wrong heart. Why this taking off of the top leaves? Why this superficial weeding? To-morrow the garden shall be as loaded as ever with evil presences. What now becomes of all your fine reforms, of all your new programmes, of all the planks in your latest platform? You are like the man who went forth basket on arm to pluck the leaves which he called weeds. You have been very busy, you have exhausted yourself, and you have in public meetings burned the leaves amid the hilarious ignorance of those who shared your infatuation. The root is still in the ground; until the root is removed nothing is removed. How is it with the heart? Out of the heart proceedeth everything that is wrong. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." You have done temporary good, most unquestionably, and for that temporary good we thank God and we thank you. If you have made one man cease from his sin for one hour, you have done good; if you have kept the drunkard out of the public-house, you have done good, and we bless God for it; but when we take in the larger view, the very purpose of the revelation of the kingdom of God amongst men, it comes to this, that it must be root-work, heart-work; cleanse the well-head, and then the stream will be cleansed of necessity. Man loves detailed service. Men do not care for metaphysics. They smile even at the word; they define it jocularly, they remit its definition and illustration to comedy. But therein they are not wise. Nothing is right until it is metaphysically right. We are led away by such expressions as "practical politics." How delighted the vulgar mind is with that expression! By the "vulgar mind" I mean the common untutored mind. We are ruined by such terms. We close places of business

by Act of Parliament. Are the places of business then closed? Not they. You cannot close a shop by Act of Parliament. The shutters may be up, and a good deal of rearrangement may have taken place as to daily procedure; but you have not really shortened the hours of labour, or done anything for mankind beyond a very small degree. Blessed Saviour, come back again that we may crucify thee; come back with thy metaphysics and spiritualities, thy lofty talk about "Make the fountain clean: blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God: out of the heart proceedeth murders"—come back, and we will send thee to Heaven by way of Calvary! It is the Church that is wrong in these things. The Church does not believe in its own spirituality. It believes in what it can write and see and build and pay for; it believes in its invoices and estimates and specifications and results and receipts; as to its metaphysics, that awful thing that looks the soul through and through, any man who would undertake the leadership of the age from that point of view, would be regarded as the father of "rhetorical and historical ghosts." It is the ghost that has made civilisation what it is; it is the ghost that built the school; it is the spirit that wrote all the literature of highest thought, boldest and divinest speculation. If you dismiss the ghost and take refuge in the mud hut of practical politics, you will go back into the barbarism out of which you ought never to have emerged. So we come to the radical idea, the radix, the root, the centre of growth. "Marvel not that I say unto you," said Christ, "that ye must be born again." Your clothing, your furniture, your articles of *virtu*, your pictures, your gardens and flowers, what are they but the decorations of a tomb, if your heart be not right with God? What are these but dying flowers thrown upon a charnel-house, until the soul is right with God? When we are more

metaphysical in Christ's sense of that term, we shall be more influential, we shall speak less and do more.

This word "flee away" is expressive. It is an action of wings. How shall we figure it to ourselves? Shall we imagine all the birds we have ever heard of, which are called birds of evil omen, all in one field, and shall there be some clap of thunder in the air, some sound of alarm, and shall they all at once rise and flee away? That is the image. See what a flight it is! These evil wings cloud out the sun for a moment or two; they make night of day. Look at these birds. I know them all by name; I know some of them too well. See how large the number! Their names being turned into English are Pain, Fear, Heartache, Bereavement, Death. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah," who by the flash of his eyes shall frighten all these birds, and make them rise and flee away—away into the wilderness to plunge their beaks into their own hearts, and poison themselves with their own blood? Oh glorious morning, come soon! We would like to see how it looks from the earth; we know we shall see it from heaven, it is in our souls to see it from an earthly plain. Morning of the blessed, morning of eternal summer! Come—come quickly! Thy kingdom come!

## VI.

### LAWS AND DOCTRINES.

"In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai, the prophet saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts ; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy ? And the priests answered and said, No. Then said Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean ? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, said the Lord ; and so is every work of their hands ; and that which they offer there is unclean. And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord : since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten. when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands ; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it. Is the seed yet in the barn ? yea, as yet the vine and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth : from this day will I bless you. And again the word of the Lord came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth ; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen ; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them ; and the horses and their riders shall come

down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts."—HAGGAI ii. 10-23.

HERE is a very curious law. A man may carry flesh on the very altar of God, flesh that has been therefore, consecrated; and he may touch bread, pottage, wine, oil, or any meat, but he cannot transfer the consecration. On the other hand, a man that is unclean by contact with a dead body, if he touch any of these things he spoils them all, he transfers contagion. That is singular. That is indicated as a law. It is not set up before us as a curiosity; it is only curious to us because we are ignorant, and call things novel that are surprising to ignorance. If we were wise we would not be surprised even at miracles—we would look for them; it is our ignorance that makes us at once incredulous or superstitious, or gives us all the weird feeling of inexplicable wonder. This is not an incident or an accident: something quite aside from the great "process of the suns"; this is a law, this is the law, this is the inner mystery and the inner sublimity of the life which we live. Why should we make the law into an anecdote? why should we shrivel and dwarf the great processes of God into little novel maxims as if we had made them ourselves? Why not study the beauty of the heart of the universe? Why not touch the greater, grander things, and get rid of this littleness and meanness and imprisonment?

Here, as plainly as words can put it, is the doctrine that influence for good cannot be exercised by proxy. No man can believe savingly for another. The dearest, sweetest mother that ever bade us goodbye could not give and bequeath to us her piety. She left the example, but every

man had to work it out for himself. Curiously and subtly, we may be the better for such associations, but we may also be the worse. No man is so criminal as he who shuts his eyes at midday and declares that he ought not to be blamed because he cannot see. He ought to be doubly blamed. If it were evening twilight, deepening more and more into evening gloom, we might make some excuse for him ; but drawing down his eyelids at noon tide, and then whining that he stumbles because he cannot see, he is no longer to be excused : he is to be condemned. So our very advantages may turn out to be our disadvantages ; yea, here also is a most singular but persistent and unchangeable law, that a man's advantages are his greatest enemies, unless he seize them with the right hand and control and use them by the right spirit. No man can find so deep a hell as he who falls into it out of the environment of a really religious family. He who has had advantages and has neglected them, or has supposed that they would do all the work of life for him, will live to find that, however illustrious his pedigree, he has made all the greater fool and criminal of himself by his indifference or neglect. You cannot touch another man into piety. You cannot transfer the Holy Ghost to any other man. There may be some priestly trick or sacerdotal legerdemain by which men hand about the Holy Ghost in this way, but it is all folly and wickedness and blasphemy, the very root of infidelity and the very explanation of the hollowness and impiety of the Church all over the world. Blessed be God for this solemn doctrine. It ought to awake every man into a personal consciousness. We are not to sit till some priest or father or pope shall pass us and say, "Take this spirit, and be sure of heaven." There is no such trickery in the Church of Christ. You must pray your own prayer ; you must allow your heart, broken and contrite, to talk to God

in its own mother-tongue. Let it make its own words ; do not think about words at all ; let your heart in all the wildness of its self-conviction, yet inspired by a singular hopefulness, talk right out to God. Its prayer may be brief, ejaculatory, like the out-throwing of an arm, but it shall mean to God all the eloquence that can be expressed by human words.

Here is the other law, that defilement can be transferred. We know it. You need not touch the man who is next you, but he can be poisoned by you in consequence of his nearness to you. You have poisoned the air. You have used no dagger, you have left that to murderers, but you have made the air pestilential, and some healthy man has inhaled that air and will go home and die ; and you killed him. This is so physically, why may it not be so morally ? The bad man cannot keep his badness to himself. We say foolishly, "The drunkard injures nobody but himself." Injury cannot be locked up within a given area ; influence cannot be closeted, bottled up, sealed down, and left there ; it poisons the air. You cannot see its subtle operation, but that operation is going on, and going on fatally. Christians ought to burn out of their speech all such follies as "He is nobody's enemy but his own : he does not injure other people, however much he may injure himself." That is folly, that is a moral impossibility. The bad man injures everything ; he spoils the air, he withers the garden, he troubles the music, he throws a film over all art. You may not be able to point out the man and say, "That is he" : yet you shall feel in the air that there is a bad man near at hand. He never lifts up the conversation, he never makes a suggestion, the mightier because of its modesty, that brightens the far-away horizon, and gives you to feel that the universe is much greater than you first thought.

He brings down everything to a low level; all his language is mean, all his references are disennobling, his whole tone and speech are such as leave upon the mind an impression of real littleness or wickedness. Never allow a bad man to come into your house if you can help it. Be very careful to what schools you send your children; never believe that a healthy constitution will cast off all pestilential influences of a moral kind. You never talk such nonsense about the child's body; you never say, "Small-pox has broken out in the school, here is a plump, blooming, sturdy boy, who will throw off all the noxious influence, and get on with his lessons even in a den of pestilence." How is it that you are wise only on one side of your nature? The child may hear words that will ruin his life, he may come under a touch that will take out of him all beauty, all nobleness, all loftiness of aspiration. This is the law as proved by experience. We cannot account for it, but it is always easier to do mischief than to do good; it is always easier to break than to build up, to cast down than to edify; always easier to dig up flowers and cause them to perish than to plant them and tend them and take care of them until they bloom out all their beauty, and having told their story die a natural death on the lap of the chilling year. We cannot help the operation of these laws. "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." Observe that there must be consent on the part of the man who would receive good, and then that his consent to keep company with the wise will be an education; but, observe, he opened his mind, he opened his soul, and he said, Speak to me God's Word, I want to hear it; tell me all you know about the upper kingdom, for I long to hear much of its music. Then being a consenting party, he cannot touch wisdom without growing wise, he cannot be in the presence of a holy man without feeling a

holy influence. But, on the other hand, question it and cross-examine it as you will, the bad man always takes something out of you, you are conscious that a felony has been wrought in your soul by that unknown thief; you are not so bright as you were, not so noble in your judgments, not so exquisite in your charity, not so liberal in your thinking ; you feel that somehow you have lost virtue, excellence ; the very questions the man put wrecked some part of your nature. How do you account for this ? We do not account for it, we are often forced simply to accept facts, and to reason upon them. A bad man's prayers are unholy. If he were to utter the Lord's prayer, he would take the Lord out of it, it would never get to heaven. "The prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto the Lord."

The prophet makes great use of this law ; he turns it into an appeal and a challenge addressed to the people of his day ; and, representing the Lord, he calls attention to the time when all things went wrong, the time of disappointment, the time of arithmetical and statistical disappointment : for God has us at every point. We cannot have our arithmetic without him, our crops and our garners, and our harvests, and our productions, and our political economy without God. The Lord keeps a record of his providence. He says : "Remember there was a time when one came to a heap of twenty measures. He said, I have twenty measures in this olive-yard or wheatfield ; here they are." Then came the counting, and lo ! there were only ten. Then came wonderment, bewilderment, and complaint. Once in the pressfat the man said he had fifty vessels ; he had counted them only a week ago ; they were standing in a row. He said : "Come, I will show you all these fifty vessels," and when

he counted them there were only twenty. How is this? ay, how is this? The Lord takes the responsibility. He says, I had a meaning in it ; "I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands." God can be the enemy of man. Men will not have this; they like to get rid of the old Bible and to write a new one: but they must always have a Bible. Please to observe that in all your investigation and criticism. Every man, the very smallest, shallowest, bleariest, feeblest infidel has his own pocket Bible; he wrote it every word himself, therefore he likes it. It is full of the most curious nonsense you ever read. You could not be troubled to read it all; you might catch your eye upon a line here and there, and that would be enough; but the point is that the veriest cripple of an infidel whoever tried to walk without crutches and could not, always has a little memorandum-book of his own in which he has written down his favourite sophisms. So man will not allow God to interfere with the crops, but God does all the same. God is not easy to fight with; he has a tremendous fist. There are the fields; look at them. Did you spoil them? No. Did you go out and frown upon them, and cause them to wither away? Never; there they are. There may be difficulties in the faith, but I prefer to believe that he who made the earth rules it, and that he rules it with a view always to the moral education of man. You can raise up a thousand questions which no preacher or annotator can answer, but I prefer to be on that side; it seems to me cooler in reason, nobler in judgment, larger in thought, profounder in simple piety.

God now changes the point of view. He says, Consider now, from this day and upward; put down upon your diary the date, what you English people would call September

24th: have you written that down? Yes. Keep it there; do not cancel it, modify it, or interfere with it in any degree; watch: this day you laid the foundation of the Lord's temple, now from this day you shall have crops enough. The Lord says, Let us go round and see how things stand at this moment, the four-and-twentieth day of the ninth month. Yes. Is the seed yet in the barn? Yes, it is. Has the vine, or the fig tree, or the pomegranate, or the olive tree brought anything forth yet? No. Then, says the Lord, this is my field to work in; from this day I will cause them to bring forth as they have never brought forth before; you have taken care of my house, I will take care of your fields. "Them that honour me I will honour;" "Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine;" "Let all the people praise thee, O God, yea let all the people praise thee; then the earth shall yield her increase." This must be very superstitious to the mind that has no windows, to the mind that is all back-door, to the mind that looks upon itself as its own blind deity; but what has now been said is the Bible, is the word of God, at least, in assumption and in claim; let it be so. The Lord is pledged to manage nature if we will attend to his sanctuary. Is it so very great and wonderful a thing that God who made the earth should keep the reins in his own hands? The other theory credits God with having built himself out of his own house. We have heard of men who have built carriages in houses, and having built the chariot could not get it out; they had forgotten that egress would be required at certain times; but we have credited God with having built the earth and established a system of laws, and locked himself out of his own house. Let us say that it was made "somehow"—in that word you

have room enough for all the infidelity in the universe. Well, being made "somehow," it was so made that nobody can get at it ; the "Somehow" has locked himself up, or itself up, whatever it be—Jehovah, Jove, Lord, Law, Force—it has managed to lock itself up in its own house. The Lord says, Watch nature ; is there a single sprig of spring growth to be seen anywhere? No, there is not. Very well, the Lord says, from this day I will warm nature, I will send a glow through her whole heart ; I will make her open her generous breast, I will cause her to put forth both hands, and you will see in the harvest-time such a cornucopia as you never saw before ; a praying earth shall not be neglected ; men that love the temple shall have their fields attended to.

We are not to judge this law by the accident of the moment ; it must be judged in all the length and breadth of its action. The very exceptions which we may apparently detect may themselves be required to be ruled into the smoothness of its infinite harmony. God will not deal indiscriminately with his people, and he will not allow his people to make an investment of their temple service. If any man shall arise and say, "If this is the case, I do not mind adding a course of stones to the sanctuary ; you can put up a course of stones and charge me with it, and I understand that if this be done I shall have a wonderful return for my money." So you will, a very surprising return ; both your hands will be pierced with thorns, and in your side there shall be a great aching of pain. God is not to be befooled.

Then comes the last sweet word—"In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will

make thee as a signet." Those who are familiar with the Bible will know the value attached to the signet. Read the prophecies of Jeremiah, read the Song of Solomon, yea, read all heathen and pagan history, and you will find what a wonderful thing the signet has always been. The king takes it off his finger and gives it to his chancellor or vicegerent, and says, "Use it, and it will open the whole kingdom." The king takes it off his finger and gives it to the queen, and says, "Write your letters all over the province, seal them with this signet, and no man dare disobey the word that is thus endorsed." The Lord says he will make his chosen "as a signet," they shall be precious to him. And, having chosen the signet, will he never change? Never, unless the people change; for once the Lord said to those who had done wrong, I would take you and cast you into destruction, even if you were a signet (Jer. xxii. 24). "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God;" "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Let no man suppose that because he was once presumably a good man, therefore he will be a good man through all the days of eternity; we are always standing on our conduct, we are always tested by our behaviour. "Watch and pray;" "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you;" "Be sober; be vigilant; for your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour;" "What I say unto one I say unto all—Watch." The Lord is pleased with the signet, he loves its legend, he looks upon its monogram; he sees there the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost—Three Persons in One God, vowed and pledged on behalf of—the man?—the character. Let that fail, and, cost God what it may, he will take off the signet and cast it from him. We live in a curious system of law. We imagine ourselves free, and yet we have not one

inch of freedom; we are bound and environed round and round by processes and operations and laws and intricacies of motion we can neither analyse, nor explain, nor understand, nor direct, nor control. We can live in love. Such life is immortality.

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us, we humbly beseech thee, a right view of the Cross of Jesus Christ thy Son. May we see thy Cross with the eyes of our hearts, and know its meaning by realising that it was meant to save us from our sins and to make us sons of God. We have hewn out unto ourselves cisterns, and we are now before thee to own that they are broken cisterns that can hold no water. We have proposed methods of salvation unto ourselves, and behold we are here as if in sackcloth and ashes, to say in the hearing of the Lord, that we have utterly failed in our purpose. We have taken us much soap and nitre, we have gone to the river side, we have sought out healers of all names and professions, and, behold, to-night we call them lies and vexation of spirit. They have been false refuges, and our souls have been mocked by a great disappointment. We bless thee that we ever heard of the one Cross—the Cross of Jesus Christ, God the Son. We thank thee that we have seen the beautifulness of that Cross with the eyes of our love. We rejoice that we have been enabled to renounce all other ways of salvation, and to cast ourselves with all truthfulness and love upon the wounded, dying Son of God. Now we have salvation, not through the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. We are no longer strangers and foreigners, nor are we any longer the bondsmen of our own will or wit or invention or strength. By the grace of God we have escaped this captivity, and have become free men of Christ. We are redeemed by the blood of the great Son of God; we are redeemed by love; we have been brought into the liberty of divine grace. We will glorify the grace by which we are saved; and leaving behind the things which have so long mocked us and filled us with bitterness and woe, we will look only upon the Christ of God, the slain man of Calvary. Upon him we cast our sins, and believing in him we are saved. We humbly entreat thee that thy Spirit may be given unto us, that we may have right ideas of sin, that we may know its bitterness, that we may know how it has penetrated

our very inmost being. We would know it that we may also understand our own powerlessness in every endeavour to remove it. We would look upon its corruption, its far-extending taint and stain, until we become horrified by the sight; then in our despair shall we know that only the blood of Jesus Christ thy Son cleanseth from all sin. May we be broken-hearted to-night in consequence of our guilt; may we find that sin is a grievous burden, too heavy to be borne; may we know that it is crushing us into death and destruction, and feeling this, may we cry out in the bitterness of self-conviction, and with hopefulness of penitence, "God be merciful unto me a sinner!" Let this cry go forth from every heart; then shall there come answers of peace from heaven, and this house shall be a place of emancipation, and men shall remember it for ever, as the ground upon which they left their chains and escaped into the liberty of grace. Touch the lips that shall speak to us; touch the heart of the speaker; touch the understanding and the heart of the hearer; and let thy word be as a speech of light, a gospel, a word of redemption; and let there be joy in the presence of the angels of God for a great turning of human hearts to Jesus Christ, Son of Mary, Son of man, Son of God, God the Son, to whom with thyself and the co-eternal Spirit, be the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, evermore. Amen.

## VII.

### RIGHTEOUSNESS NOT OF THE LAW.

"If righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."—  
GALATIANS ii. 21.

If people can make themselves good by doing what is called their duty, then the incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ constitute the greatest mistake that ever was made in the universe. If a man can be really good, can make himself all that God can possibly desire him to be, of his own motion and will and by the resources of his own invention and energy, then the mediation of Jesus Christ was a great and grievous expenditure of pain and life and sorrow, and an expenditure

that ended in nothing. The Apostle Paul, therefore, makes a very sharp line here. He does not stop to say, "You may, by very great energy and difficulty, make yourselves acceptable in the sight of God ; perhaps it does seem to lie within the limit of possibility, that you may be able to gather yourselves up from the dust of death and set yourselves in the house of God as children of light, without calling upon God to do anything specially for you." No. He says, "If you can put yourselves right before God by doing what you know to be your duty, then the Cross of Christ is the sum of all mistakes,—the greatest and most terrible blunder that could be made by God himself." It becomes us, then, to understand what the apostle is talking about, because I am quite sure there are many people who are under the impression they can make themselves right. There are possibly some people who are under the impression that they can, at all events, do a good deal towards putting themselves in a right position and attitude before God ; who are saying, "What is the use of the Cross ? and why should Jesus Christ have died ? If a man is doing his very best he will surely recover himself and God will accept him, and so far there is an end of the matter." The apostle overhears this rough talk, this self-idolatrous speech, and having heard it, he says, in effect, "Well, then, you just come to this in your reasoning : You tell God to his face that the gift of his own Son was a mistake, and you say to Jesus Christ, in the midst of his pain and death, 'You are suffering and dying for nothing ; it was a great mistake on your part to come into the world to save sinners.'"

What is meant by the law here? Let us suppose that it means this, in general terms : Any attempt at duty-doing with a view of self-salvation,—whether it be the

keeping of the ten commandments, whether it be running round certain observances and ceremonies that are to be discharged or honoured in this way or in that so many times a year ; whatever it be it means this, if you can get to righteousness along any other path than over Calvary, you insult the Son of God, and write the word mistake on the Cross. I do not say that a man cannot wash his hands ; I am not here to reason that it is not possible for a man to put on a good deal of external decoration. I believe it quite possible for a man to say to some of his appetites, "Now you shall be starved for six months." It is very possible for him to say to himself, "I will put myself under discipline and under control for a certain period of time ; I will eat so much at such and such intervals ; I will drink no more for the rest of my life anything that can intoxicate me, and never more go into such and such associations which I believe to be debasing and corrupting. There, now, what more can you expect me to do ?" What have you done ? You have done an outside work ; you have washed your hands, but you have not removed the stain from your heart ; you have qualified yourself to say to your neighbour, who may be taunting you, "I am as good as you are." If the question lay altogether between man and man, you have done a great deal in doing the thing which I have now indicated. But seeing that the question does not lie between man and man primarily, but between man and God, you have only washed your hands, you have not taken the stain out of your heart. Then what do you mean by righteousness ? It is quite as important that we should understand the word righteousness, as that we should understand the word law. There is a kind of character which you describe by the word "moral." You say about a certain man, for example, "He is a very moral character ; he is a very

decent, respectable and trustworthy man ; he is a man against whose character no person can justly utter one word of reproachful criticism." And there you end. Up to a given point it is a very valuable character. If you are describing a citizen, you have given the man a testimonial that any one might be proud of. If you are describing the character and relationships of a tradesman, as amongst tradesmen, you have given the man a clean bill. But if you are describing a moral condition as before the infinite holiness of God ; if you are talking of this question in the light of God's purity, and the light of heavenly citizenship and eternal destiny, then you have said next to nothing ; nothing, indeed, except there be behind what you have said a wonderful, spiritual, religious life that takes in all the mediation of Christ and all the covenants of mercy and grace !

So then up to this point we are tolerably clear. When a man is doing what he calls his duty, observing his fasts, controlling his appetites, tempers and tendencies, when he is keeping externally the ten commandments, he may be said to be at least making an effort to keep the law. When a man understands by "righteousness" morality—good conduct as between one man and another—he is talking of a superficial view of righteousness, he has not got to the essence of the meaning of the term ; and, therefore, he is floundering in darkness, though as between man and man he may be talking even sensibly. By "righteousness" understand the purity of God ; read the word righteousness as you read the word perfect in this text, namely : "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Then tell me whether, by duty-doing, whether by running the round of observance and ceremony and ritual, it is possible to lift yourselves up into the light, the purity, the ineffable

splendour of the holiness of God. The apostle says, "Men, you cannot do it ; you are on the wrong scent altogether ; you are working downwards not upwards ; you have mistaken the spiritual signification of the terms ; you are working in the dark, and your supposed salvation will be disappointment and ruin ! When we say that by doing our duty we can face God, we can become righteous and prepare ourselves for heaven, are we talking wisely ? The apostle says we are talking insanely. He says, "I cannot believe that Jesus Christ would have come, taught, suffered, died, if there had been any other way than his atonement to the righteousness of God, to the security and service of heaven." If you set up your little ladder of duty, and say you can climb to heaven up that, then he says, " You insult the Cross, that greater ladder, the foot of which rests upon earth, the head of which is lost in the glory of the sky ! "

What do you mean by keeping the law ? I daresay a good many persons imagine that they are keeping the law when they are keeping but the letter of the commandment. A man having a law enjoined upon him may possibly be doing his duty as well as he can just to satisfy the letter ; but the law may be to him a burden. He may be saying in his heart all the time, " Now if I had my way I would not do this ; but I am obliged to do it, because such and such consequences depend upon my doing it ; I dislike it ; I should like a little further liberty than I have,—but I will do it." It is impossible to do it in that spirit ! Though it be done in the letter, it is violated in the essence and spirit of its meaning. Well, but here is a man who obeys the law ; he comes at the appointed hour ; he sits till a stipulated moment ; he hears every bell that regulates the intervals of his service ;

all the time he is there his head is bent over his work. Do you not call that keeping the law? No. I ask, "Is his heart doing it? Is he keeping the time with his heart? Is he doing the work because he loves it? Is he doing it because he would not enjoy doing anything else? because he believes in it, honours it, and is devoted to it?" If you say, "Yes," then I say that is the man who is keeping the law.

If I tell you to keep off a certain path ; if I say, "Now this road is private property : you have been walking down it for the last twelve months ; but from this hour I shut it up, and use it for my own purposes alone ; you must never step upon it again,"—it is possible for you never to step upon that ground again, and yet to be breaking the law every time you pass by the side of the road. "Breaking the law! How? You told me not to go upon the path, and I never have done so: how then can I be breaking the law?" Thus. Every time you see my trespass-board you walk away from it and say, "That is an offence to me. I have walked along that path for twelve months, and I would gladly walk along it again, but for the fear of the consequences : I spit upon your board ; I only avoid the path and go along another road because I am afraid of the consequences of trespassing upon your property." Are you keeping the law? In the letter, but breaking it in the spirit.

You say to your boy, "You must not speak to the boy next door from this day forth ; I believe he is exercising a very evil influence upon your character, and if ever I find you speaking to him again I will visit you with my displeasure." And your son never speaks to the lad. Is he keeping the law? Not necessarily. I must inquire a little further into the case before I command him. I

will tell you what, mayhap, the boy is saying : "I would like to speak to the boy very much, but if my father knows that I speak to him, he will be setting me some hard task, or in some way be showing me his displeasure. I should like to speak to the boy ; I cannot do so because certain consequences are in front of me, but every time I pass him we exchange smiles, every time we come within sight of each other we have a friendly nod ; we have tokens that we pass between us, but I never utter a word to him." Is that keeping the law ? In the letter. You said, "Never speak to him again," and your son can look you straight in the face and say, "I never have spoken to him." You say, "Good boy, you are keeping the law." No, he is breaking it, breaking it in the spirit, breaking it in his heart, breaking it in all its deepest meanings. So it is perfectly possible for a man to be externally moral for selfish ends ; possible for a man to be keeping up a good character as before his fellow-men for selfish and limited purposes. He says, "My character is my capital ; if I forego my character amongst men, I shall forego my living, my family will be brought to disgrace and ruin ; I must keep myself up in this line or the worst social consequences will ensue." He would go to the very extremity of his own evil designs and corrupting passions, but because consequences are looking him in the face, consequences become his religion, and he says, "I dare not brave you whilst you are looking at me so sternly and grimly ; whilst you are gathering your frowns and looking at me as if you would punish me, I dare not do otherwise than keep myself within a given limit." He is a respectable man in society, is he not ? It is a lie ! It is the cruellest irony, it is the profoundest travesty, to call a man good who is good for selfish purposes. He would be a villain, and perhaps is only good because

of the thinness of his blood or the scantiness of his opportunities.

Now God has given us a law, a great spiritual law, and we have endeavoured to keep it, and we have failed in doing so. Do you ask me if I keep God's law? If you ask me so frank a question, I give you a candid answer in reply. I say, "No, I do not keep any one law of God." "Thou shalt not steal." Don't you keep that? No. "Thou shall not bear false witness." Don't you keep that? No. How so? I keep it so that none of you can touch me; I keep it in a sufficient degree to keep the magistrates off my track; I keep it so as to be able to satisfy society that there is no legal claim upon me. I am religious enough to escape the turnkeys. But what of that inner honesty? that transparent, translucent, essential, infinite, holy honesty that can bear the light of heaven upon it, through and through, without discovering in it a flaw or break? This hand you cannot chain without my having a criminal charge against me. I may be able to bring you up and punish you if you put a chain upon this hand, because there is no stain upon it which you can see with the naked eye. But what of the inner desires, the inarticulate speechless tendencies, the occasional feelings? What of the looks that are blasphemous? What of the throbs of the heart I dare not put into language? What of these things? Ah! there I come into the sanctuary of God, and feel what I am. The hand is clean but the heart is corrupt. I can defy society, but I dare not look God in the face. If I have any speech to make to him I must say, "Give me solitude, let me hang down my head towards the dust and darkness, and let me smite upon my breast and say sobbingly, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!'" Not until a man gets into that condition does

he know what the gospel means. The Cross is a mere piece of wood to him ; Christianity is but a varied mythology ; the gospel is but another way of amusing his speculative fancy. But when he gets these, when his soul is filled with complaints and groaning, when he knows that he has tried to keep the law, has kept it in the letter and broken it in the spirit, when he is in that condition of self-despair, then the words, " Jesus Christ the Son of God came to seek and to save the lost " become to him light in darkness, music in sorrow, morning coming upon the hopeless heart. These words are the very music and gospel of God.

The apostle says, If righteousness can come by the law, then we have lost righteousness. Have we? Yes. How to get back the lost righteousness is the question. We must not forget that we have to conduct our inquiry as sinful men. We do not begin as those who have kept their first estate, to discuss moral questions. We are down! Observe the attitude and start-point. We are sinful men ; we convict ourselves. The question now is, when we are down in the very depths of self-conviction, how to recover righteousness before God? We say, " Shall we get it back by duty-doing? " We cannot ; we have cut both hands off. " Shall we get back our righteousness by doing something? " We cannot ; we are dead ; we can do nothing. " We are dead in trespasses and sin." Deny that, and my speech is an unknown tongue to you ; contend that there is one spark of life in you, then God himself can do nothing for you. I can only preach to you and myself in proportion as we are agreed, that we are sinful as before God.

Let me put the case so that a child may understand it. Let me suppose that I have stolen something from

you. I never can get back my honesty by law. That is a very severe statement. If I restore the property to you,—what then? I am still a convicted thief, and must be so for ever. But if I come and say to you, "Take your property back; there it is, every atom every inch and particle." Am I not an honest man? No, I am a thief, and a thief for ever. I say, "Here is your property back." You cannot reply: "Then here is your character back." I can bring you back the thousand sovereigns I stole from you, you may weigh them in your scales, and pronounce the weight sufficient, and when you have taken back the last of the thousand sovereigns that I myself have laid down upon your counter, you cannot say, "There is your character back." Never! the character is gone. If you send me to prison for twelve months, that does not bring the character back. Punishment never can redeem, punishment never can atone, mere punishment never can convert any man. It may terrify him, it may make a coward of him, it may make him fall down upon his knees and say, "Oh! oh! don't strike me again!" There punishment ends. Punishment never turned a thief into an honest man. "But it is twenty-five years since I stole your sovereigns." Time makes no difference in criminality; a man is as guilty at the end of five thousand years as he is at the end of the first day of his theft; he is as guilty at the end of ten thousand ages as at the time of perpetration, if so be he has not acted up to the conditions which I shall presently explain. Righteousness cannot come by the law. If I have been convicted by you, sentenced to punishment, and have undergone the punishment, I am as great a thief on the day I leave the jail as I was on the day I entered it. So far as the law is concerned, I have nothing more to do; I have made the answer which the law

required ; but morally, spiritually, in my heart of hearts, the great work is yet to be done, and the law can never do it. But if I come to you and say, "I bring back your property, I am sorry I ever took it." Stop ! The moment I say the word "sorry" I get out of the region of law altogether ; law knows nothing about sorrow, law cannot make any provision for emotion. The moment a man utters one word of penitence he passes from the legal into the spiritual. We cannot allow him, therefore, to mingle the two things up, and to say, "Now cannot I get back my character ?" Because to say "I am sorry" is to enter into the spiritual region. The apostle has now shut us up in the legal sphere, saying, "righteousness cannot come by the law" ; but if you say that you are sorry, that your heart is broken over the thing, if you are in a penitential mood, I must deal with you upon different grounds. You change the venue altogether if you say, "I can keep the law by doing my duty ; what more do you want ?" Then I am acting upon a wrong principle ; I have mistaken the doctrine of right and wrong and I have aggravated my sin. But suppose that from this moment we could do everything that God asks us to do, that is to say, that we could fulfil the whole law ; from this day forth we could keep every one of the ten commandments,—literally and spiritually. Suppose that, I say. Then I have a question to ask you immediately. What about the past ? Suppose that at this moment I can pay you every penny of the debt I shall contract, what about the ten thousand pounds I am owing you already ? How can I get into the back history and bring up my arrears ? It cannot be done ! What about the past ? What about the sin that is already committed ? Who has the hand that can stretch back through spiritual history and take away every taint and stain ? Who can

sponge out the evil writing of long-gone yesterdays? Then what is to be done? I am shut up; I am gagged; I am imprisoned. What is to be done? You tell me I cannot do my duty literally and spiritually, or if I do it from this day forth I am only doing my duty—nothing in excess of it—and I shall have nothing to carry back to the old account. What is to be done? This: there must be a stupendous act on the part of God; God must meet us; the great redeeming motion must be made in heaven. It has been made. What is it? The Gospel says it is this: “Jesus Christ tasted death for every man.” Jesus saw that we could not recover ourselves; he looked, and when there was no eye to pity and no arm to save, his own eye pitied and his own arm brought salvation. There, that is the great mystery of godliness. Are we prepared—punished in our hearts, torn in our experience, self-convicted in our guilt, assured that we can do nothing towards self-recovery—are we prepared to say, “Lord, it is a great mystery, but a mystery of love. I am broken-hearted and I throw myself upon this work of Jesus Christ!” When a man says *that* he is a saved man. I plead those who vitally require the pleading to say so. Do not ask me to explain all the speculative and metaphysical difficulties of the case. There is nothing that can be altogether explained; there is nothing in life so simple that it can be explained without leaving any shadow of mystery behind. How can this great scheme of redemption be explained so as to be compassable by our understanding? It came up from unbegginning time, and stretches through unending duration. Who am I, that I should condense it so as to make it compassable by every understanding? If there be any truth, then, in these illustrations and any force in them, it ought simply to come to this—either man is right when he affirms he

can recover himself, or God is right when he says, "There is only one way of human recovery, and that is by the Cross of Christ." There is no middle course. If a man can save himself, then Paul says, "Christ died in vain." If a man can make his life clean in the rivers of earth, then Jesus made a tremendous mistake in suffering for sin. If this great work could be done by putting out a hand, then Christ made a tremendous mistake in submitting his heart to be broken, wounded, and slain. If any man can, of his own motion and strength, step into heaven and have a right to be there, then the Cross of Christ is the gravest of all the misarrangements and mistakes of universal history. Are we prepared to say that? Are we prepared to say to the dying Christ, "You are dying for nothing"? Are we prepared to say to the Cross of Jesus, "This thing was set up in vain"? Are we prepared to say to the whole testimony of the Scriptures, "We don't believe you; it is still in my power to recover myself, and to put myself into a proper attitude as before God"? I am not prepared to say that; I am prepared to say this, "I have sinned before heaven, and in thy sight; and am no more worthy to be called thy son. I cannot recover the past, even though I may be equal to the demands of the future; I cannot cleanse the iniquity of the gone days, even though all my to-morrows were lived in life and beauty before thee; but that cannot be, I know enough of myself to feel that I dare not promise to live one day in thy sight without committing sin. Lord, I cast myself upon the Cross of Jesus Christ. I am sure he could not come and die in vain; I will throw myself upon him, though I cannot explain the mystery of his grace; if I perish, I will perish at the Cross of thy Son; I have made my decision, God help me! No dead man was ever found within the shadow of the Cross of thy Son, and thou wilt

not allow me to perish there." Will you say the same? Many of you have said the same thing in effect. It is the joy of our life, it is the comfort of our future, it is the inspiration of our service, it is the weapon with which we shall fight the last battle, it is the word with which we shall begin eternity!

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, give us to feel that we are thy children ; help us to call thee Our Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. May we have the child-heart ; we want the spirit of love and tenderness and trust. We would see that thou art waiting to be gracious, and we would ask thee to receive us more and more into thy love, that we may truly live and do good. We pray this prayer in the name of the Saviour of the world. He is thy gift, he is thy Son ; he came to give his life for the world. Greater love than this hath no man that he lay down his life for his friends : but herein is love, that whilst we were yet enemies Christ died for us. Behold, what manner of love is this ? oh the height, the depth, the length, the breadth of the love of God ! Who can know that which passeth knowledge ? May we live in this love, and have no fear ; may we know that perfect love casteth out all servility and dread and baseness ; may thy perfect love dwell in us, may our perfect love answer the call of God. Thus would we live and move and have our being in God ; we would be Godly, Godlike. We know what our Saviour told us to be : " Be ye holy, as your Father in heaven is holy : be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." But who can work this miracle save God only ? This is the work of the Eternal Spirit. Holy Ghost, descend upon us, fill our hearts with sacred love, may the fire of the Lord consume all evil. When our way is dark and troubled we come to thy house, when we have exhausted our own little strength we cry out for the almighty of God. Thou knowest how broken our hearts are ; we are sorry for the wasted past, we have piled up transgressions before God until they darken the heavens like a thick cloud. Lord, have mercy upon us ; Saviour of the world, save our souls ; Spirit Eternal, come to us, or we shall surely die. Give us faith in God, in the unchangeable Father ; may we know that whatsoever changeth, God is unchanging : on his immutability we would build our hope. If the Lord will hear us in these things, and answer us abundantly, we shall forget all sorrow and pain, we shall begin to live. Amen.

## VIII.

## CHANGING NAMES.

"Their names being changed."—NUMBERS xxxii. 38.

CAN a man not change his name when he pleases in a land of liberty? No. There is no land of liberty. On the other hand, you can change a name but you must do it formally, legally, publicly, solemnly. There is a land of law. Is a man's name not his own? No; certainly not : there is nothing that is a man's own, but a man's sin. I thought we had certain great rights? So we have : and we have also certain very definite limitations in this land of liberty. You say, "What shall we call the child?" What do you mean? You have only liberty at one end, and that liberty you give away at a certain moment, and you cannot recover it again except at loss, cost, public fine. Where is this wonderful free thinking and this marvellous land of liberty, and this sublime gasconade "Britons never will be slaves"? We are all slaves to one another ; we live in slavery ; life is a matter of bondage, either to custom or to law, either to decency or to righteousness. We live in a cage ; because we can see through the bars we think we live in a land of liberty. Perhaps it is a pity to disturb the hallucination. Certainly it would be a pity if it ended in itself but it applies to so much that we must really break in even with some rudeness upon the fallacy that any man is as free as he thinks he is. What shall we call the child? You have selection at one end, and none at the other. A man must not trifle with his family name.

He cannot be calling his children by different surnames. This is life,—plenty of liberty at one end, but quite shut in at the other. This is life under law ; this is life under discipline. We must accept the facts. What room for taste as between names beginning with A, B, and Y, and Z ; why, there is the whole liberty of the alphabet : but *the name was fixed for you*. You can change it if you will pay, if you will publish, if you will go through certain solemn processes ; but a man cannot call himself by one name on Monday and another name on Tuesday. Society will not have it, commerce could never be conducted upon this basis ; all the security and confidence and dignity of society would go down at once if men were at liberty to play with their names. There is a register of names. We consult that register when we claim property, when we want to establish a legal status ; we exhume the old yellow books, and find that on a certain day seventy years ago there was a child baptised or registered under such and such a name. But the child lives in a land of liberty : why has he not changed the name ? If he has there must be another register of the change. We thus claim one another, bind one another, belong to one another ; and if we trifle even with our designations, which were never intended to be blown through the trumpet of fame, though we live in the humblest obscurity, we must abide by the identity which is fixed by a name. This is right ; this is religious. Who would give up his father's name, and the name not of his father, but of his fathers—the plural that stretches back to immemorial beginnings ? You may be William or Thomas or Henry or Robert, but the family name, the household name, the sweet old name that has in it a thousand burials and a thousand weddings, a thousand desolations and a thousand festivals, why, that you hold in sacred trust.

God can change names : he is almighty. In the olden time a name went for something. There was hardly any need then for surnames. It was a blessed state of primitive simplicity. What was Adam's surname?—Abraham's?—Jacob's? They wanted no surnames then. The Lord came down and said to Sarai, "Thou shalt spell thy name differently ; it shall still be Sarai in a way, but I am going to make of thee a princess"—change the spelling ! All names belong to God. The angel said to Jacob, "I will call thee, and thou shalt hence be called, Israel, for as a prince thou hast prevailed with God." Saul became "Paul" by divine transformation of character and divine resetting in life. Jesus Christ said to his little company, "Henceforth I call you not servants"—that was a beautiful name as applied to him ; "Blessed are these thy servants," we say to him, "O thou Greater than Solomon,"—"I call you not servants but friends." We grow up to certain privileges. There is still an advance to be made ; we have not secured half our majesty ; what little inheritance we have is but a handful of mud compared to the infinite provinces of light and truth and beauty and music which God is prepared to hand over to us in signification of his approval of our growth, our progress, our moral beauty. It is the Lord's business to change names, and until our names have been changed by him we have not risen to our true identity. The Lord knows what to call us. He will always find for us a better name than even our dearest friends can invent. God never calls a man to a less name if the man has been faithful, or if he has been brokenhearted and has promised in his contrition that he will become a better man. The multitude said concerning one, "He is a sinner": Jesus said concerning that self-same one, "He also is a son of Abraham." The world gives nick-names, by-names, names that poorly

conceal some poorer sneer ; but the Lord gives appellations which signify character and point in the direction of destiny. The names given to us by God are inspirations as well as certificates. There is nothing final in the gifts of God ; he says, I will give you better wine : I will show you greater things : after thousands of ages incalculable you have only begun to be. That is the mystery of immortality.

There is a possibility of names being only so much information. A name may simply stand for an article ; that article may be living, automatic, mechanical, but still little better than an article. It is possible to deplete a name of all its poetry and light and highest meaning, and then to wear the name as a badge. Thus Christ's name has been used. Out of Christ as a name has been taken deity, atonement, priesthood, responsibility, highest morality ; then men have worn it as an epaulette, or some poor badge distinguishing one degree of baseness from another by the smallest quality. There is a greater name than "Christ," and yet it is only the name of Christ expanded into its fullest significance. What is a greater name than Christ ? Christliness : because there you have the character, the law, and the Gospel, the requirement, the responsibility, the discipline, and the necessary growth. If we be Christly we may bear the name of Christ ; if we be other than Christly we have no right to the name of Christ. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his. The spirit determines all rights in this direction, and if a man, how small and obscure soever, have the tender spirit, the spirit of forgiveness, the spirit of love, the spirit of truth, he is entitled to bear the name of Christ and call himself a Christian,—not mature, advanced, and complete, but initial. Blessed are they who know that

after long years, a whole stretch of seventy, in the school of Christ that have only begun the alphabet, they have not yet begun even words of one syllable.

Change of name marks progress. What is this little island, the most southern in the Mediterranean, a wondrous place, about equidistant from the great continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa? It is filled with men of a stern countenance, lofty, broad-shouldered military men, rough, tremendous in energy, invincible in pluck. That is Caphtor, the land of the Philistines. What is this land in which Paul preaches, and founds churches, and ordains elders in every city, and leaves a loved son in the Gospel to continue and complete his work? It is no more Caphtor, it is Crete,—the name being changed. What is this island which Homer mentions in his *Odyssey* and thus gives to it classic immortality? Homer numbers the cities; he goes to ninety and looks as if he could go towards a hundred cities. It is the same island, known to us in modern days as Candia. The earth has always been throwing off its old geography, and having a new map printed for itself. You never can satisfy the globe with maps. It is always finding fault with this name and that name, and by-and-by if our ancestors could come back they would never find their places if they had nothing but modern geographies to go by; they would not know the earth again, though the earth abideth for ever. Yet there be spirits gone away from olden time which, if they could be reincarnated would never find their earthly home any more, the names being changed. There is a change that indicates progress, therefore there is a change that indicates the new civilisation; there is a change of a man's name which means that he is going up. What do I hear that great sweet voice say? What is that figure that

bends over the blue barriers? What is that voice? Is it God's voice? Yea, nothing less than the music supernal. It says, "I will give thee a new name." There is to be a name on the forehead, there is to be a white stone in the hand; each man is to have a name which he alone can read: then will come back the old times with infinite glorification when a name will stand for something—for rights, for characters, for claim, for destiny.

The name may be stolen. It is possible to go under false names. Find a man who has two or three *aliases*, and say, will you introduce that man to your children? Will you admit any one of his names upon your commercial books? He is known in society by half a dozen different names—will you trust him with one farthing's-worth of your stock? You know you will not. A name may be stolen in the sense of being misapplied. The label may be true; the label was once true; but the bottle has been emptied, and refilled with lesser quality. Yet the label remains, and truth has thus been turned into a lie. We may once have had a right to certain names, and we may have forfeited that right, and we ought now to give up the label and go anonymously, or label the bottle Poison.

The name may be an irony; that is to say, a paradox, a contradiction; it may come to bring humiliation upon the very person who wears it. What can be a greater trial to any youth than to be called "John Milton" with his family name following it; "William Shakespeare" and his family name in sequence? You overburden the young life; you do not give that life a fair chance in the world; you excite expectations by these names. Moreover, you should take care how you dishonour the names of the illustrious dead. They are held by society as a sacred

trust ; we have no right to bandy them about and scatter them indiscriminately upon unknown lives.

When we take the name of Christ, therefore—and this is the purpose of the whole exposition—let us see to it that it be not a stolen name, that it be not an irony, but that it express a reality of character. Are we to expect perfectness then in Christians ? We are not to do so. What are we to expect from a man who bears the name of Christ ? That he is ever striving to be like Christ, that though he commit a thousand blunders he matches them with a thousand prayers, that though he fall seven times a day the depth of his fall shall mark the agony of his desire to be recovered and re-established in the love of Christ. Christians are not perfect men. The whole question of time and space is against the idea of moral completeness or perfection. You cannot have eternity in time, you cannot have heaven upon earth because there is no capacity to receive the city of light : but you can move in a right direction, pray at the right altar, which is the sacred Cross ; your uppermost thought can be, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” then falling will be rising ; even mistakes shall become elements of education. This is what we mean by being in Christ,—having a lofty purpose, a steadfast will, a consecrated life. We do not mean pedantry, Pharisaism, claim to the kind of respectability which thinks it has a sort of right to enter heaven ; we mean humbleness of mind, love of the beautiful and the true as embodied in Christ ; we mean dependence upon the Son of God for all spiritual enlightenment, liberation, and right standing before God ; we mean being crucified with Christ, rising again with the Son of God ; we mean the operation of the Holy Ghost upon the heart and mind, the understanding, the conscience, and the will ; we mean

all these in effort, in purpose,—not in acquirement, not in positive acquisition.

What is our name? Is it thief, liar, faithless person? Are we known by the names which indicate meanness, sordidness, littleness? All these names may be changed, all these unworthy garments may be stripped from the shoulders of our character, and we may now by contrition and by the exercise of living, saving faith lose all such names and reminiscences and stigmas and begin a new life with a new name. There is not a liar that may not be a true man; there is not a foolish and wicked person who may not turn and become one of the children of the Most High. Christ is able to save to the uttermost. You know what the “uttermost” is; it is the last step on the plank; it is more than that, it is one foot over the plank, and the other going; there, even there, Christ is able to change your name.

## PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY GOD, we come to the feet of Jesus thy Son to learn the mystery of life. We know not what it is ; we feel it. Sometimes we are its victims, then great is our sorrow, and our pain who but thyself can understand ? Sometimes we are more than conquerors, through Christ which loved us ; then we are in heaven, and we know the meaning and the music of immortality. But to-day we are upon life's war path, walking the common road, performing the daily task : meet us in these daily moods, these commonplaces of thought and feeling, and make them grand. Thou makest the bush as a blazing sun when thou dost dwell in it, yet not its tenderest leaf is hurt by all the fire. Come, dwell in us, thou Spirit of Flame ; Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, dwell with us, abide with us ; fulfil the promise of Christ ; be unto us the final miracle, showing us the light of God, the truth of God, the love of God, as never seen before. We are an-hungered ; find bread for us in this wilderness : we need not go from our Father's house to find aught we need. The river of God is full of water ; may we drink thereof and lift up our head and be glad, and pursue the journey with ardent purpose. Help every good man to be better ; help him to pray more largely and tenderly and take firmer hold of heaven. Spoil the purpose of the bad man ; turn his counsel upside down, and at noonday bring sudden night upon his folly. Help all hearts to be patient, forbearing, and especially hopeful. The nights are so long, the wind is so cold, our little light of hope is threatened ; renew its glory, sustain within us the heavenly light of Christian hope. Make our houses homes ; may the roof be storm-proof, and may nothing put out the hospitable fire around which we gather in love and trust. Help us the few days that remain ; our lives are but a hurried succession of days, and at the last, yea, in the sunset hour, may we speak not of shadow but of dawn, the beginning and the assurance of heaven. We speak all this in the dear name of Jesus Christ the Saviour, the Son of Man, so near us, the Son of God, so mighty ; and we know that speaking it all at his Cross it shall come back upon us in plentiful answers of joy and strength and peace. Amen.

## IX.

## LOSS OF CHARACTERISTICS.

"If the salt have lost its saltness, wherewith will ye season it?"—  
MARK ix. 50.

THE saltness is the salt, not the weight. It was a pound weight yesterday, and it is a pound weight to-day; is it therefore not the same? No. What is gone? The saltness, the characteristic; the one thing without which it is nothing. "If the salt have lost his saltness"—not his colour. It was white yesterday, it is white to-day; is it not the same? No. Why not? It has lost something. What has it lost? it is the same weight, it is the same colour; I see no difference. It has lost the one thing without which every other thing is nothing. Mark where you can see them best the figure one and a whole row of ciphers after it; you call the figures ten millions. Look again; is it still ten millions? No. What has it lost? The one at the top; the thing that gave value to every other thing; all these remaining figures are empty ciphers. "If the salt have lost his saltness"—the one thing which made it valuable. It is just the same with you. You weigh as much to-day as you did last year; you are as bulky, as well-favoured externally: you have as much money, you occupy as much space: what is the difference between you to-day and yourself twelve months ago? There may be none; there may be a distance measurable by infinity. You may have lost something. Now what? Yourself! You are no more a man; in image and aspect you are accounted human, in the census you figure as a unit:

but you may have lost your saltiness, your characteristic, the thing which made every other thing valuable. So the subject evidently is the Loss of Characteristics ; that is, of those points which are personal, special, and distinguishing.

Up to a given point all men may be nearly alike. As men pass by you you say, "A man, and another man, and a third man, and a fourth." That is loose talking ; that talk lacks discrimination. It is irreligious talk. We perish for want of discrimination—in business, in friendship, in thought, in prayer, in all the range and gamut of human life. We look upon a crowd, and say, "What an assemblage of men !" In a rough sense it may be so. It is only when we go into the detail of the case that we begin to say, "This is great, and this is small : Here are five talents, and here is one talent : Here is genius, and here is insanity." O the detail of the divine judgment ! One by one we face the Judge. Could we go in upon the stream of a great crowd we might enter heaven ; but the gate is so strait that only one can pass at a time. Do not lump your life. Nor do you set down upon one plain column loss, but indicate loss of what. You may have lost much, and lost nothing. If the salt have retained his saltiness, what of any other loss !

There is need for this discrimination, because life is a process of loss. By loss we grow ; by loss we gain. There is a loss that is natural, that is divinely ordained, that brings with it great increase of light and strength, of general faculty and rich character. You have lost your youth, you do not know on what day it left you ; the angel whispered goodbye, and you did not hear it. Yet there was a kind of awkward moment in your consciousness when you said, "I am no longer young."

Have you lost everything because you have lost your youth? You may have gained the more; you have undergone an evolution that may have been upwards. We may now hear you exclaiming that you see more of the landscape and catch the morning light earlier; you may have a larger charity and a broader, sounder judgment. When I was a child, I thought as a child, I spake as a child, I acted as a child, I was natural and seasonable in all the actions of my life; but now that I have become a man I am the child by so much perfected: lost only as the bud is lost in the blossom.

You have lost a good many of your ideas. When you lived within a certain environment how positive you were; you knew everything; all heaven could teach you nothing. What a different tone there is in your voice to-day! You have lost something of certitude, but only of vocal certitude. If you knew yourself through and through, as God knows you, it would be clear to you that your loss has become a gain. There are some hesitations that indicate growing power. A man who sees only one point speaks with great definiteness. Any man could speak more definitely about a ceiling than about a sky. There the ceiling is, fifty feet overhead, quite visible, quite measurable; there can be no doubt whatever about its size and length and breadth and colour and shape: but who shall speak so of a sky, God's ever-ascending sky? So now you have come to see more: life is larger than you once thought it was; you now hear prayer where once you heard nothing of the kind; you construe a sigh, not into despair, but into supplication; you say, "Listen! so long as a man can sigh in that way he is seeking heaven, he is calling out, inaudibly so far as words are concerned, for God, yea, for the living God; the meaning of that sigh, being inter-

preted, is, ‘Oh that I knew where I might find him!’” So, having lost what was once so clear and so definite, and having come out into the open space and seen the greater expansions of God and God’s purpose, you have lost, but you have gained.

The trees all lost their leaves last autumn. There was one withered leaf that said, I will not go. It hung on until late November, but as November was somewhat kindly, it said, I will not go. And December came, and with frosty teeth, as it were, bit it off the branch, and it fell seven times dead into the snow. Does the poor tree say, I have suffered loss, I am no longer what I was? Assuming the tree to be intelligent and imaginative, to be emblematic of the spirit of growth, the tree says, I have lost the leaves, but not my root; one generation cometh, another generation goeth, but the earth abideth for ever. The leaves have been coming and going these hundred years, but the branches are all the stronger, and they are waiting and all but praying, and if I might interpret what they say it is, addressing the dawning spring, Thy kingdom come! You have only lost the leaves, perhaps. How is the root! Is it strong? is it healthy? is it well set in the earth? Are you standing up in sweet and tender expectancy, saying, “Presently the skies will be bluer, and the sun warmer, and the wind more gentle, and I shall be better clothed this year than I ever was before”? Then account your loss gain.

Some losses are merely external and incidental. A man has lost his health. He has not therefore lost his soul; the salt has not lost his saltiness. What is health? A momentary convenience; a thing not to be despised, no man wants to live in a dilapidated house if he can help it: but the house is not the tenant. No man would put on a

broken-fingered glove if he could do better ; but the glove is not the hand : the hand has still its cunning ; it is an artist's hand, it is a friend's palm, it has all its old skill and power. A man has lost his money. If he be a poor-natured man, shallow, and low in quality, he will moan about this, he will tell everybody about it, and try to get it back by lamenting the loss ; he will not feel quite so poor after telling you how poor he is. What has he lost ? Everything, if he be only of the Mammon birth ; nothing, if he have within him the seed of God. There is a triumphing over external and incidental losses that is worth nothing. A man may be so gifted with the power of sleep as not to know when even financial loss has come upon him, and he may boast of his equanimity. Such boasting is vain. He is the true man who says, "Yes, the loss is considerable to me ; it means loss of a good many comforts and loss of opportunities of doing good ; it has all gone, but, blessed be God, since it went I have known as I have never known before, the power, the majesty, of prayer." Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven ; cultivate your characteristic manhood. Your manhood is not in your health, not in your money, not in your circumstances ; your manhood is in the quality of your soul, and if you have that you will season the world, you will bless the day in which you live.

Some losses are of course vital. Some men live in one point only. Suppose that a great singer who has entranced his audiences (for adequate remuneration) for twenty years should lose, not his hand or his foot, but his voice ; the saltiness is gone. He might have lost his sight, and still sung like an angel ; but he lost his voice, and therefore he was dumb. But the audience would still like to see him open his lips ; they will still look upon the kindly old face

and say, "He once was a man of power, let us hasten to his feet and hail him again." Did the public ever do so with its old favourites?—even its old preachers? The public hath a short and easy method, not with the deists, but with its favourites. The voice of the charmer gone, the charmer himself is gone. Here is a great painter, but he has lost his sight, he cannot see the canvas. Will the public still buy what his blind hand writes in ink or pen, saying, "He would have done better if he could!" There may be here and there an eccentric gratitude that may so far follow its idol; I have never seen it.

Coming into a still higher level,—Speech is good, but if the speech have lost its truthfulness, what then? The speech is as eloquent as ever, the words fall into their places as gently as they did before. This man is a very wizard in the utterance of words, but you have come to suspect his sincerity, his truthfulness; and men soon get tired of eloquent lies. That is the blessed prerogative of truth, that it rules all time and grows into youthfulness; and that is the bad prerogative of falsehood, that it eats up its own fortune, devours its own capital, outruns itself at last; a beggar, naked, ashamed, and yet unable to avail itself of any concealment. The time will come when the fig leaves will decline to coat and cloke a liar. Some respect should be paid even to nature; we must not outrage the holy angel of summer.

How true it is that some men are all summed up in one characteristic. "That or nothing," we say about some men. Is that a detraction? On the contrary, it is the best tribute we can pay to them; it often means concentration, intensity, converging upon one unchangeable point; it often means simply the focalising of all the forces upon one purpose. "This one thing I do" is a text often

misquoted and misapplied, we all know, and yet it may be so quoted as exactly to indicate that point. The apostle lived in Christ and for Christ. He rose in the morning to speak about him ; he fell asleep in the shadows that he might recover strength to speak still more loudly and sweetly about him on the coming day. What we say of some men we say of some institutions : they have their saltiness, their characteristic, their peculiarity. Beware of losing your accent ; beware of losing the thing in which inheres all your individuality, all your treasure, and all your power ! “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?” What shall it profit the salt if it be laid up in a vase of gold if it have lost its saltiness ?

I have sometimes put the case thus : What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his sight ? Who would accept the present, the gift, the victory ? Understand what the case is : you have gained the whole world ; its five-and-twenty thousand miles of circumference, all garden land you may make it ; the price is that you are to be blind. Will you have it ? Is there a fool here who will take the bargain ? Does one man stand up and say, “Yes, give me the whole world and take away my sight ” ? What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his hearing ? You shall be deaf evermore, but you shall have the whole world, all its acres, all its palaces and castles ; the price is eternal silence ; no more the voice of mother, friend, child, teacher ; no more the ministry of music. You are deaf ; I can see it in your eyes, I can see it in your attitude, in your head, I can see it in your fingers : you are deaf ! Will you take the world on these conditions ? My definite and pointed argument many years ago on the same point was this :

If a man will not give his sight for the world, his hearing or his health for the world, will he give his soul? Oh, man, hear the word of the Lord: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the world and lose his own soul?" What shall it profit the salt if it be served on the table of kings, and yet have lost its saltiness? You are drinking away your manhood, you are gambling away your strength, you are debauching yourself: take care; you are committing suicide, you are losing the one thing that made you what you were. Beware! Oh, earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord! Let it thrill you like a gospel from heaven.

Set about the other course this very moment. Try to recover the dead self. You can never do so, but God can do it. If you come with brokenheartedness to him, and say, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and lost my sonship, my status in the house," then you can put your little proposition. You can only make little propositions when you are in a sinful and self-consciously corrupt state. You can make your proposition to become a hired servant. How well the prayer dips at that point; what a rhythm of sincerity there is in that desire! Not, Restore me; not, I want to go back again: sincerity could not talk so loftily; sincerity has its own little alternative—Let me begin downstairs, let me begin outside; only it will not be like the outside of the man's house in the far country where I fed the swine; it may be outside, but it will be outside my father's house; I shall see the windows, I shall see the doorstep, in the summertime I shall catch sight of the sycamine, the rose, the beautiful flowers that grow round the door, and I can sometimes in the darkness crawl near, and I might then overhear some home words, some home music: make me as one of thy hired servants!

If you will begin there, nothing can hinder you going right up to heaven by daily, spiritual, holy evolution ; but if you begin at any other point, higher and ostentatious, I cannot tell to what depth you may fall, I cannot tell by what deflection you may be seduced. Begin at the lowest point ; from that point the road to heaven is an open, dazzling, warming, glowing sunbeam. I leave this word with you. Lose your garment but not your soul ; lose your money but not yourself ; lose your very health but keep your spirituality ; and though Providence seems to be hard against you, and though the troubles are coming sevenfold in thickness and in swiftness, say, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust him : if he means me to go through this way, I will go if I only have the assurance that at last it opens upon heaven." He that hath ears to hear, let him hear !

## PRAYER.

FOR thy mercy, Lord, we bless thee. We live in mercy : because of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed. Thy mercy endureth, yea, endureth for ever. No man knoweth its beginning, no man can calculate its end. God is love. Thou dost live that all may live ; there is no death in God : in God there is no darkness at all. He is the King eternal, immortal, the only wise God. Thine hands have been opened unto us in lovingkindness, therefore have we had an abundance day by day ; thou hast beset us behind and before and laid thine hand upon us, and behold we have lacked nothing, and we are here to open our mouths in thankfulness, and to praise the Lord in a loud, sweet song. Oh how great thy lovingkindness ! higher than heaven, who can measure it ? wider than all we see, who can lay his arms upon it ? Thou hast been eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame, and hearing to the deaf ; thou hast numbered that which was lacking ; thou hast wrought the miracle of finding us hungry and sending us away with abundance and gladness. We wonder at thy love ; it makes the morning bright, it fills the night with stars ; behold thy goodness is tender, and thy kindness is loving. What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us ? We have nothing to render but ourselves, and we are wounds and bruises, and we are corrupt before the Lord because of transgression : yet thou wilt accept us if we offer ourselves at the Cross, and in the name and power, in the grace and fulness, of the Son of God. We thank thee for all thy care ; we are assured that thy promises are sealed in an everlasting Yes, and that none can turn away God from the purpose of his love. We shall be saved, we shall be brought into the happy because the holy land ; there we shall abide, and go out no more for ever. Thou wilt rule the raging of the sea, thou wilt bring all things to blossom and to fruitfulness ; not one shall be lost out of the Father's hand. Enable us to feed upon these promises as hungry men feed on bread ; enable us to drink of this love as the hart drinketh the waterbrook when he is heated in the chase. We have lived poor lives before God ; we might

have been strong, and valiant, and radiant with spiritual prosperity ; we might have buried all our doubts ; our fears a thousand strong might have been laid beneath our feet in utter overthrow : we might have triumphed over our baser selves. We mourn our want of faithfulness, our want of love, our want of confidence in God. Forgive us every one ; forgive us for Christ's sake : he is God the Son ; he died that we might never die : oh may we begin our immortality in God's forgiveness ! Lead us all the rest of the way. Thou knowest all the road ; there is nothing hidden from thine eye : help us to hold thee by the hand and to walk steadfastly as it were by the side of God. Give us that meekness of heart which rests in the Lord and waits patiently for him. The meek thou wilt guide in judgment, the meek thou wilt teach thy way : save us then from self-vaunting and self-trusting, and from everything that is of the nature of self-idolatry. Help us in meekness of heart and in lovingness of spirit to cast ourselves wholly on the almighty and allgraciousness of God. Thou hast shown some of us great and sore trouble ; many have been in the wilderness year after year, and have seen nothing of green grass or blooming flower, and have heard nothing of singing bird : the Lord show them the way out of the desert ; the Lord enable them to believe that even the desert is part of the road to heaven. We pray for others who have never been in the wilderness, yet have always been tempted of the devil ; they have had the temptation of prosperity ; they have had the indulgence of continual victory and satisfaction in life ; they care not for the poor, they care not for God ; there is no thought of eternity in all their vacant mind ; their talk is of oxen and of markets, of fields and of profits ; they are full of venture and enterprise, ending in nothingness : for such we pray, because they cannot pray for themselves. We remember in our loving interest and supplication all our friends who are away from us. Some are on the sea, some are in distant lands ; yet they are with us in thought ; they have reckoned the hours, they have fixed the time of the assembly of the people ; now they share our song, and now they share our prayer : the Lord regard them all, and feed them with the bread of heaven. Go into all our sick-chambers ; visit all our weak ones and make them strong in religious hope and confidence ; rock all our cradles ; take the little ones to school, and may they advance from knowledge into wisdom : and when all the little circle has been run, and we find a grave at the end of it, may we find that grave to be a concealed door opening upon heaven's eternal light. Hear us, and plentifully answer our prayer, for it is offered at the Cross. Amen.

## X.

## MUTUAL BAPTISMS.

"I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me?"—  
MATTHEW iii. 14.

THE subject might be fittingly described as mutual baptisms—every man needing to be baptised by every other man, provided that both are good and sincere. We must enter into each other's baptism. Whatever you have been baptised with I must be baptised with, and if you have any power of baptism I must come under it, and if I have any power of baptism you must come under it. It is only under a common sacrament like this that we realise the unity of our manhood, and come into a rich estate and fructification of sympathy. We are not to allow men to be baptising without going down to their Jordan and having some application of their sacred stream—whatever it is, provided always that the man is sent of God, and that he is in the right Jordan, and that his purpose is good; it may be even severe in righteousness, but it is a kind of righteousness that is intended to end in restfulness—sweet, divine, perpetual peace. Jesus Christ underwent all the baptisms of history. It became him so to do, because he in his turn came to baptise all his followers. If he himself was not baptised by every good man that went before him, how could he speak to the world? he might have spoken to a land, to a province, to a multitude; he could not have spoken to all ages in their mother-tongue. Jesus is chief of linguists. Other men know several languages, but Jesus Christ knows all the tongues; knows them through and through, can explain

them to their own speaker, and can read to the heart a language which it alone can understand. Why? Because on him there are drops of all rivers, streams and flowings, rills and threadlets of all the baptisms with which God has washed and purified the centuries of human history. Every other baptism must feel its own incompleteness. John said, "I have need"; but how could the great Baptist, the forerunner, the Vox Clamantis, have need? Is not this the way with every true baptism? Does it not indicate the need of another, a higher, a grander sacrament? Are we not led on from one baptism to another, from one ordinance to another, always saying at the end of each, I have need: I could take more rain, I could admit larger sunshine, I grow: fill me, thou all-giving gracious God? Your baptism has done nothing for you if it has left you prim and neat and self-satisfied. If it has enabled you to say, Now I am all right, and I have simply to sit down and dream, and muse, and contemplate, and wake and criticise my neighbours,—you have not been baptised. We shall know that you are baptised by the right man and in the right way when ye say, I have need to be baptised more and more day by day, until I stand amid the white crowd on the golden streets.

A beautiful spectacle is this which comes before the eyes of the imagination—that which is supposed to be superior going to that which is supposed to be inferior, and asking a blessing from the subordinate. This is the idea of the text. Jesus had no need in himself; the baptism was unto repentance, and therefore in that aspect he did not come under it, for he had done no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; he had no need of chrism or sacrament, or washing or purification: he accepted it in another and larger sense. Here is the superior asking

a favour of the inferior. We should advance from superiority to supremacy if we could learn the divine art of condescension Condescension may have no necessity, and yet it may express by an attitude what it would do in relation to the necessities of others. Wealth should go to Poverty, and say, Baptise me in thy cold river, O grim evangelist! And Poverty would say, What, Wealth come to be baptised of me! I have need to be baptised of thee; I have heard of thy greatness, and thy richness, and thy prosperity, and thy grandeur; I have heard of thy throne and thy crown and thy sceptre: I thought it would have been in another direction that providence would have operated; I would come to thy warm, broad, gracious river, and be baptised of thee. Nay, quoth Wealth, I have need to be baptised of thee; baptise me in the name of thy trinity of patience, resignation, contentment: I am apt to be proud and to trust to myself and to my riches and to my environment: I have need to be baptised of thee, that I may be chastened and humbled, and refined, and elevated by losing selfishness; oh let me come into thy Jordan, thou evangelist named Poverty; I will learn a good deal from that baptism. So Health should go to Suffering, and be baptised by it. We have no true health until we have had suffering. Radiant, prosperous, majestic Health should go down to poor, pale, writhing Suffering, and say, Baptise me! And Suffering would erect itself so far as possible and say in a remonstrant tone, I have need to be baptised of thee, and comest thou to me? Yes, saith Health, in instantaneous and emphatic reply; I come to thee, thou art needful to the completion of my education, I shall be the stronger for a touch of suffering; when I have felt one sting of agony I shall pray better, and trust more completely to the supernatural and the divine: I have had too much of this

world's prosperity, I have sung all its gay songs, and gone through all its hilarious excitements, and now I want to be baptised of Suffering, chastened and humbled and refined by endurance: baptise me!

What a pathetic inquiry is this of John! How wondrously he changes his tone! He has been comminatory, he has damned the age with a rough and violent damnation, he has created a hell that he might burn certain of the hypocrites of his day, and deeply has he dug the pit, and he has spared nothing of brimstone; and yet when he turned round, his face all red with burning shame, he saw Jesus coming to be baptised, and in a moment he was a new man, all the roughness was taken out of his voice, he cursed no more. "Comest thou to me?" What a coming, what a coming down, what a coming from infinite distances, what a miracle of condescension, what an impossibility of approach. "Comest thou to me?" This is how the world is to be lifted up. It is by making oneself of no reputation and going right down into the very middle of the world that we get hold of it. You ought to have a church in the middle of the market-place; you ought to create a testimony in the very hospital of suffering. Everywhere there should be proofs of divine condescension that would save itself from every taint of human patronage.

Christ always in the first instance shocks the world. He never did anything but shock it until he made his foothold. Nobody welcomed him. The angels knew who he was and sang a song at his coming, but no man knew him. He shocked the world by the place of his birth; by the manner of his going in and out amongst people; by his taking an interest in publicans and sinners; by his abusing with the right of divine authority the religious

men of his day. Christ had no patience with mere religion ; Christ denounced the lawyers and the letter-writers, or scribes, of his day, saying, You have written so many letters that you have utterly overlooked the spirit ; you have been so occupied with religion that you have had no time for the cultivation of piety ; your religion is a form, a cloak, it is not a life, a power, a tender and helpful grace ; away with you ! He never sought popularity ; he ate and drank with publicans and sinners ; they said of him, "He is gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner." He would be baptised by all conditions and elements and influences of humanity. If there was a door before him he opened it, and went inside to see what was being done in that room : every chamber is a schoolhouse to the Son of God.

Not only does Christ always shock the world at first, but, secondly, he gladly surprises men. So we hear the cry, "Comest thou to me?"—to *me* ! Oh miracle of love ! We expected the Son of God to come to constellations, to address whole universes, to thunder through the heavens ; and not come to this heart, and that poor little dwelling-place, and yonder cot in the wilderness. Say whether this has or has not been the cry of the ages when Christ has come. "Comest thou to me?" I am the chief of sinners ; thou surely hast mistaken thy design, it was to some other house thou wast coming ; mine is the house of sin, the house of shame, the house of weakness ; there is no window in all this house that looks upon the green fields of heaven : comest thou to me ? "His blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me !" is the cry of astounded and grateful piety.

This is Christ's development. He covered the whole world in his mission of inquiry and his purpose of love.

He did not find himself exclusively in any one book of history, he found himself everywhere. He said when he came upon difficult passages, I am the key to all these mysteries, I am the answer to all these enigmas. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded to the two listeners in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. Abraham saw his day and was glad. Christ therefore represented all history, all experience, all necessity. Having thus absorbed the whole of the Old Testament he came to the intermediate dispensation called the dispensation of the Baptist—the rough modern Elijah—and he said, I must take up this baptism also ; whatever has been done by the providence of God with the sanction of God must take effect in me and on me ; I must represent the sum-total of the divine providence which has ruled the world. Having done that, he advanced and said, Now you must believe on me ; I have come up through Moses and the prophets and the minstrels of Israel, I have come through the Baptist dispensation, and now I am the Son of God, and you must believe on me. A voice from Heaven came, saying, “ This is my beloved Son,”—now all the others stand back ; Moses is behind, and Elijah is behind, and John is behind, and Jesus is alone, the Saviour of the world. But in a short time he will go : by whom will he be succeeded ? By one of his own appointment :—I will send the Paraclete, he shall abide with you for ever. So now we have nothing whatever to do except historically and remotely with Moses and the prophets and the baptists ; we know even Christ himself no more after the flesh: we are in the dispensation of the Holy Ghost. Now there is nothing limited, provincial, or imperial : we have to do with the universal effusion and diffusion of the Holy Ghost. That is the course of providential evolution. From one to many ; from many to one, called John the Baptist ; from

John to one called Jesus ; from Jesus to one called the Holy Ghost ; this is the trinity of history, that is the triune God, that has shaped all chaos into a temple beautiful as light.

At what point are we ? This is again the difficulty of the Christian teacher. All his scholars are not standing shoulder to shoulder or moving step for step. The sermon always leaves somebody behind ; not every one can follow the great prayer. Some wings are weak, and ten yards towards the light begin to flutter and to fail. It becomes us therefore to say at what point are we. Are we in Moses ? So be it ; you are on the right road : Moses is a teacher sent from God. Are we in the prophets ? Quite right : the prophets are the children of light, and what they speak is music ; hear it. Are we in the Psalms ? Then we are not far from the kingdom of God : the Psalms are overhearings of heaven, the Psalms are music that has fallen off the edges of the heavenly goblets of joy and gladness. Where are we ! With John the Baptist ? Quite right : a rough teacher, stentorian in tone, severe, ascetic, tremendous in discipline ; but he is on the right road. Where are we ? With Jesus ? Then ye have not come to the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire, but ye are come to Mount Zion, yea, to the very uppermost cliffs and points, even to Jesus, and the blood of sprinkling, the eloquent blood of the world, beside whose appeals Abel's blood is dumb. Where are we ? In the Spirit, with the Holy Ghost, open to all celestial influences, every window looking towards heaven, every expectation directed towards the heavenly hills. Do we guest in the guest-chamber of our heart's love the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost ? Then our next step is in to heaven. Do not be rude with those who are still

in the Old Testament ; do not be discourteous and distrustful with those who are still in Jordan. They know no better ; they still think they must be plunged into cold water, or something awful will happen to them. They are so far on, and you are immeasurable miles further on ; still they are on the right road, and they may be coming forward.

Into what have we been baptised ? We do not need water for baptism. That is the grand mistake, to think that water is necessary in any form. You can be baptised now, without leaving your seat. He is not baptised who has not been baptised with fire. When you are full of divine enthusiasm, when you are emptied of self, when you have no thought that relates to its own interests, when you want to go out and save the world—by that token know ye that ye have been baptised with fire. All baptisms point upward to another, even to that fiery chrism. When we have received the anointing of fire, we have fulfilled all the dispensations of history. But when a man has only been so baptised that the water has frozen upon his very face, say not that he has been baptised !

## PHASES OF TEXTS.

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*[May be amplified by the author or his readers into complete discourses.]*

"He could not be hid."—  
MARK vii. 24.

**H**OW could Jesus be hid ? Yet that is what he wanted to be. He wanted rest. He sought temporary cessation from his arduous ministry. He who fashioned the heavens and held the key of every star went into a little house upon the earth that he might quiet his throbbing nerves. It is always beautiful to see Jesus in his hours of bodily exhaustion ; beautiful because it brings him so near to our own trembling weakness.

We know how impossible it is for some men to hide themselves. There is sure to be some point of self-revelation, even though the men themselves may be unconscious of it. Are we not always revealing ourselves ? Say, for example, in dialect ; who can disguise his Scotch, or Irish, or French ? The disguise may be simply wonderful up to a given

point ; but in one inflection, or accent, or peculiarity of phrase, the revelation is certain to be made. "Thy speech bewrayeth thee," was the charge which the maid brought against Peter. The speech was not metropolitan but provincial. Who cannot at once tell the difference between the dwellers in great cities and the scattered villagers of rural districts ? The difference between a traveller and the man who never went far from home is instantly discernible. The point is that in some way or other men are constantly revealing themselves. Can fragrant flowers be hidden in any chamber ? Can high breeding be mistaken for vulgarity ? Can the churlish soul successfully ape the manners of a generous disposition ? Thus along the common levels of life we see by many illustrations the meaning of the text in regard to Jesus Christ.

As it was with Christ so it must be with the Christian. He cannot

be hid. The good man discovers himself without any attempt of self-display. Let a good man enter a den of thieves and the thieves will soon find him out. There will be a separateness about him which will excite their suspicion. In many ways he will soon show that he is not one of them; he does not know their tricks; he does not speak their language; he does not interpret their hints. Or let a Christian be consulted in moral perplexity and instantly men will take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus. He will appeal to divine standards. He will not be led away by shallow worldly maxims. He will at once enter the sanctuary of great principles and within the glory of the heavenly Altar he will judge the whole case. The Christian cannot be hid when he is face to face with the last enemy. There are two ways of meeting death—the way of fatalism and the way of faith. The Christian mocks death, taunts him as an overthrown foe, and triumphs over him by the power of Christ.

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**"From this day will I bless you."**—HAGGAI ii. 19.

We should make a treasure house of our special days. In some small degree we have begun to do this. We speak of red-letter days, which may be taken as a

fair indication of the meaning of the text. Every man has days which stand out with specialty in his personal calendar. The birthday, the wedding day, the first success, the solemn affliction, the driving away of dark clouds, all these indicate the uniqueness of certain events. Read chap. i. ver. 15, and chap. ii. ver. 18. God marked with special blessing the day in which great interest was displayed in the building of the temple. Whoever takes an interest in the sanctuary shall not be forgotten by the living God. Only God himself can draw the deep broad lines which separate one section of life from another. Between the day of affliction and the day of deliverance God draws an ineffaceable line.

It is in our power to make holy days, glowing hours, in our own life. If we could make every day in the year special, what wealth of memory and inspiration we should accumulate! We remember the day of penitence,—when we were broken down in godly sorrow and God drew nigh to give us the blessing of his pardon. We remember the day of restoration—when we repaid the debt, or restored the property, or fell down in humble confession before those whom we had wronged: we remember how the light came: we remember how notes of happiness thrilled the air. We remember the day when the holy vow was

spoken,—the solemn word, the binding oath, the outgoing of the soul in some poignant declaration of feeling and purpose. Of all such days we should take special notice, and go back to them as to wells whose water we drank in times of weariness.

We can make this a special day. This may be the day of our regeneration! On this day we may offer our first heartfelt prayer! In this very hour we may confess our sins as we have never confessed them before. If we have done wrong we can begin again to seek God and implore his forgiveness. Days are opportunities. Days are separated from one another by the black line of night. Why not begin now the upper life, the grander time, and make this the day of days.

**"Was Paul crucified for you?"—I COR. i. 13.**

This is a test question. There are many such questions in the Bible, and if we could faithfully answer them we should be conscious of substantial progress towards the kingdom of heaven. Take examples of such questions: "Who created these things?" That is the inquiry which settles everything as to power and sovereignty. Look beyond the creation to the Creator. Bring the element of personality to bear upon all the

mysteries of life. If God created these things he created them for a purpose; if God created these things it is right to interpret him by them, and so interpreted he becomes at once infinite, majestic, and condescending, for he lights the lamp of the glow-worm as well as kindles the flame of the constellations. Take a question in the matter of Providence,— "How many baskets full of fragments took ye up?" This is a challenge to examine facts. What has once been done in love can be done again. Have we ever been allowed to perish? Have we ever lacked the necessities of life? Have we not seen our fears turned into hopes? When the great sorrow has come has not the great consolation come with it? If God has helped us in six troubles he will not forsake us in the seventh. Take the question of Redemption,— "Was Paul crucified for you?" That question settles everything, the crucified is King. He who has suffered most for us should be regarded as our Saviour, and we should account it our chiefest glory to suffer for him. Because Christ died for us we will live to Christ. Paul had no difficulty about the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement. Christ died for us: Christ was delivered for us: Christ bore our sins: Christ dies, the just for the unjust. This was Paul's doctrine, and to lose it is to lose inspiration.

Whenever we are in doubt or in severe temptation we should ask, Who was crucified for us? we should hasten to the cross: we should sink all minor questions in the grand inquiry, "If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

"Crucified for you,"—That is the true safeguard against schism. He who is loyal to the cross cannot be a schismatic. Schism is not our relation to one another, but our relation to Christ. Not how the branches stand in relation to one another, but how they stand to the living trunk is the determining consideration. Jesus Christ is not a fellow creature or we might claim the right as well as the liberty to differ from him. Along the whole line of thought connected with the cross we come upon that mysterious emotion which carries with it all the force of inspiration. Religion without pathos is false, it is a mere idea, an intellectual invention, a temporary theory. Religion must penetrate the very depths of the heart if it is to secure a thorough sovereignty over the soul. On the other hand, religion without service is superstition, at best a vapour, a sentiment, a whiff of manufactured fragrance. The Gospel is not a theory, it is a Force: it is a Discipline: it is a standard of conduct.

"The house which I build is great: for great is our God."  
—2 CHRON. ii. 5.

Notice how continually in the Bible a definite reason is given for service in the cause of God. The text is a striking instance. The house was not built to gratify human vanity, or to dazzle strangers and travellers by the vastness of personal wealth. The house was built for a distinctly religious reason, viz., "For great is our God." Our conception of God controls everything. A little conception means a little service: a grand service means a corresponding loyalty. Given a narrow conception of God and who would build him a great house? Who would live to him a great life? Who would render him self-sacrificing service? Who would care to pray to him? On the other hand where the conception is approximately adequate there will come out of it life and service, sanctuary and worship, worthy of its range and intelligence.

A house may be great without being fine. This ought to be known by those who cannot cover the walls of the sanctuary with gilt, or carry up those walls to be crowned with a noble dome. The little sanctuary in the valley may be "great" as representing great service, great reverence, great devotion.

The word "great" should be re-defined. The usual conception of "greatness" relates to magnitude, majesty, costly and brilliant environment. That is the crudest definition of greatness. If we search the Bible we shall find that God is "great" not only in power, which is the most elementary expression of greatness, but "great" in compassion, in love, in patience, and in all moral qualities. This is true greatness. Greatness of the body is nothing: greatness of the soul is everything. Some men are giants in the flesh; others are giants in the mind, which is the true greatness.

The house of God is great not because it costs tens of thousands in gold and silver, but because it is great (1) in its messages, (2) great in its welcomes, (3) great in its remedies. The house as we now have it is not final. Nature begins to take down the temple before the prayer of dedication is offered. The material house must signify a spiritual sanctuary, or it represents money misspent and art degraded.

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"Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"—MATT. xvi. 13.

Jesus Christ cannot occupy a middle position. He lays claim

to too much to be satisfied with representing a mere average of quality. The evangelical faith distinctly recognises the humanity of Jesus Christ. In the New Testament he is specifically spoken of as "the babe," "the child," "the boy," and finally "the Man" Christ Jesus. On the other side there are passages of Scripture which can never be explained on the theory of Christ's simple manhood. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father": "The glory which I had with thee before the world began." These passages alone indicate Christ's distinctiveness from common human kind. The trinity is often spoken of as "mysterious," but we must remember that a religion without mystery is an absurdity. It is common to represent Christ as the holiest of men, but if he is merely this then by his very holiness he is the one man whom we do not want. Example standing by itself is a terror. We do not want an example only, we want a Redeemer, a Saviour of the soul. The deity of Christ elevates our conception of the value of human nature. That such a Saviour should come from heaven to save men shows the estimate which God himself has placed upon man. Would God die for that which was not worthy, in some aspect, of his attention? When we would know how great man is we must carefully study,

so far as is possible, all that God has done for him.

Have a definite conception regarding Christ. He submits himself to criticism. The great thing to be dreaded is not an incorrect view of Jesus Christ, but absolute indifference to his person and claim. Indifference is more deadly than opposition. In this respect, as in others, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

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"God is not ashamed to be called their God."—HEB. xi. 16.

"He is not ashamed to call them brethren."—HEB. ii. 11.

Sometimes we are ashamed of our own work. Children may be ashamed of the very name they have to bear. Shame is a curse that comes upon life from many points and affects it in many degrees. God is not ashamed for us to bear his name if we do it in simplicity and faith and love.

When is God not ashamed to be called our God? When we are "seeking a country": daily leaving the material and measurable, and advancing towards the spiritual and the infinite. God is not ashamed to be called our God when we are deeply pledged to the beneficent service of society. Jesus himself went about doing good. God is not ashamed of the

simplest acts of charity if they express an honest dedication of our means to his service.

When is a father ashamed of his child? Is it when the child is lame, or blind, or helpless? Never! It is when the child is slothful, self-seeking, mean, un-forgiving, malicious; it is then that the father blushes to own his child. Blindness of the body may create a new endearment as between father and child; but pollution and wickedness fill the fatherly soul with dismay and shame.

When is Christ not ashamed to call us brethren? When we are poor, or suffering? Never! Jesus Christ does not judge by circumstances, but by disposition. If we have the spirit of Christ we shall be honoured of Christ. What he expects from us is pureness, faithfulness, close imitation of his own life carried on in the strength of his own grace. Then, though our clothing be poor, and our dwelling-place a hut which the wind can throw down, he is not ashamed to call us brethren.

God is ashamed of nothing but wickedness. Christ is ashamed when we bring discredit on his cross. Beware of the men who glory in their shame. Imitate the great Apostle when he cries, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ."

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**"Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering."**

—ISA. xl. 16.

This text may be taken from the point of Sin, or from the point of Gratitude.

Sin has no equivalent. If we think we can make up to it, and fully satisfy its penal demands, we are absolutely mistaken. After we have burned Lebanon and Bashan, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, we have left untouched the great mystery and the horrible shame of sin. Man ruins himself by the supposition that when he sins he can apologise, and that no more will be heard of his offence. He trusts to his own resources. He treats God as if he were an equal, and sin as if it were a mere breach of courtesy. Until we get rid of this delusion we cannot listen to the gospel with sympathy or appreciation. The first great conviction to be wrought in the soul is that "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering." Matter runs out. The answer to sin must come from another quarter. The offended God alone can arrange for the remission of sins, and according to revelation it has seemed good to him that Jesus Christ should be, through his precious blood, the only Saviour of the world.

So far as we ourselves are con-

cerned in the matter of self-redemption we are in blank despair. When we have burned the last tree and slain the last animal, we are as far from peace and an intelligent sense of forgiveness as if we had never lifted an axe, or shed one drop of sacrificial blood. But it is in despair that we find one of two things, either Death, or Gospels! "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." It would seem as if sin had to be tried, proved, revealed, before the gospel could be received. We must consider the mystery which connects time with sin, experience with conviction. A blessing may come too soon to be appreciated. Jesus Christ was born in the fulness of time. There is a divinity in method. Not only are stars ordered and set in their places, but events, processes of history, are also ruled by spiritual Providence. The seasons come in unalterable succession, so do the events of human life, the mysteries which make up the music of completed purpose.

What Lebanon and the beasts thereof could not accomplish has been effected by the direct interposition of God. "What the law could not do" was done by divine grace. Grace itself is an aspect of law, the higher law, the love-law. What mechanics cannot do gravitation does. What the local furnace cannot do summer triumphantly effects.

The text may be also applied to the subject of gratitude. If we want to offer God some sign of our thankfulness we shall soon find that "Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt offering." What shall we render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards us? The love of God has no equivalent in material return. What we give we have first received. What then can we offer unto God? We can offer love, and reverence, and service, and joyful obedience. To obey is better than sacrifice. He who gives his heart to God most surely pleases the God to whom it is given.

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**"Our Lord Jesus Christ."**—  
2 THESS. iii. 18.

This is not an isolated text. The text would seem to cover the whole of the New Testament after the four Gospels. We find it in the Epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Galatians, the Ephesians, the Philippians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, and Philemon. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the expression is our Lord Jesus, and in the Epistle of Peter the same expression is employed. The emphasis is upon the word *our*. He may not be the Lord Jesus Christ of others, but he is ours, and we must serve him as such.

We speak of our home, our country, our duty, our boy. The idea is that of special appropriation,—whatever Jesus Christ may be to others he is to us the fairest among ten thousand and altogether lovely. He is not one of many; he is absolutely alone.

Two things must be remembered: (1) It is an intelligent appropriation. We have elected Christ for reasons which appear to us to be sufficient. We knew what we were doing when we renounced the devil and offered to serve under the banner of Christ. (2) It is a voluntary appropriation. We are the slaves to Christ by consent. In such slavery we find the only true freedom. We could blaspheme, we could do the devil's work, it lies quite within our power to abandon the upward and heavenly journey; but by the grace of Christ we have elected otherwise. We are not forced into faith; we willingly and joyfully desire that Christ may reign over us. (3) The appropriation is not sentimental. Christianity is not a perfume which we enjoy. It is not a landscape on which we gaze with rapture. It is not music by which we are entranced. Christianity is a standard of conduct, a daily discipline, a criticism which penetrates into the very sanctuary of motive and desire. Jesus Christ is our leader and example in service. Jesus Christ will not be

partly ours. He never shares the throne of the heart. We must receive him wholly or he will not be received at all. Jesus Christ asks for no tribute of admiration. If it were a matter of admiration we should by so much be equal to the object which is admired. This is a matter of devotion ; it is a matter of worship. We say to Jesus Christ, "My Lord, and my God." We can admire a multitude of men, but we can only worship, truly and intelligently, one God and Saviour. We must get rid of the fallacy that it is enough to speak respectfully of Christ, or to class him with the other thinkers and leaders of the world. Jesus Christ lays down his own condition,—"If any man will come after me let him take up his cross,"—the cross ! the mystery of evolution,—the innermost heart of God,—the sublimest endurance of pain. O holy cross ! O star of life's night ! "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The cross is the tear of the universe.

**"Lord, how long?"—PSALM vi. 3.**

We may ask questions of God. The father loves to be questioned by his little child, so does our father in heaven. Quite a group of texts might be gathered showing

from what various points, and with what various purposes men ask questions of God. We have a blessed consciousness that if we ask in sincerity, God will surely answer us. We cannot account for this consciousness, but it is a fact in our experience. The mystery is that it is God himself who asks the very questions we suppose we ourselves are asking. That is also the mystery of prayer. It is God himself who prays, and God cannot deny or reject his own petitions. Asking questions is one aspect of prayer. "Lord, teach us how to pray." Will God reject his own scholars ? Will he first teach a man and then despise a man's ignorance ? The reason of prayer, as well as its inspiration, is to be found in God. Take the very question of the text, a question which occurs also in Isa. vi. 11. The man who asks this question is in despair. Agony is the accent of this inquiry. Man has given up all hope, and in the wildness of his despair he utters his last piercing cry to heaven. In the hour of his agony it is God or nothing.

Take another instance :—"Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling ?" (Ps. lvi. 13). Sometimes the question goes from the lower to the higher; in this case it descends from the higher to the lower. God had done wonders for the soul, would he forbear to

render assistance to the impotent feet ? It is impossible that God could have done the higher and left undone the lower ; and it is impossible that God who has done the lower can attach no importance to the higher. " If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith ? " " How much better is a man than a sheep ? " Thus the question moves in both directions ; if God can cure the body, is he unable to heal the soul ? If God can redeem the soul, is he unable to meet the necessities of the body ?

" Wilt thou not revive us again : that thy people may rejoice in thee ? " Here we have cause and effect recognised. Only God can revive the soul, that is make the soul live again, renew its youth, and realise its immortality. Joy has place in Christian service. Who can work with efficiency when his soul is in gloom and fear ? When the soul is consciously happy in God, then even miracles seem to lie easily within the range of its power. Do not let us offer a mean prayer for joy ; let us offer a great prayer for revival. When the fountain is clean the stream will be pure. When the soul is right with God it will seize upon all manner of service, and execute it with bounding joy and profoundest satisfaction.

How grand is the idea that man can ask questions of God ! How sublime the thought that we can make, as it were, demands upon God ! " If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Deeply consider the peculiar necessity which must ask questions of God. There are senses in which prayer is not voluntary. The soul cries out because of a need it can neither explain nor satisfy. When the soul is in that high mood it takes the kingdom of heaven by violence.

" Things that are made."—  
ROM. i. 20.

Take this idea from a manufacturing point of view ; then the contrasts will be wax, as " made " ; growing rose, as not " made " : or statue, as " made," and life as not " made " : or surgery as an art as contrasted with anatomy as a divine creation. What art is to nature God's works are to God's words. In a sense the creation itself is made, but the thought which preceded it was not " made." Creation is the outward expression of a divine and spiritual force. Creation is God's robe ; the earth is his footstool ; the whole frame is temporary being intended for dissolution.

Character is greater than house.

Music is greater than organ. The house can be made, but the home is a spiritual evolution. Law may be an organisation, and may be codified, but grace has another aspect and a totally different beginning. Literature is made; revelation is inspired. Mechanics are discovered and invented and are measurable, gravitation is from the beginning and is incalculable, —is infinite.

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**"Things contained in the law."**—ROM. ii. 14.

Written law can never be more than a part of law unwritten. Writing is embodiment and embodiment means something local and limited. We must, of course, have letters to begin with. There is a time when obedience is not a matter of consent, but severely a matter of discipline. But even written law has an unwritten law behind it, and only by the power of that unwritten law can the written law be permanently effective. Written law must be inspired by unwritten justice. Literal law is but the image or the voice of unwritten reason. Laws made by statesmen are impotent unless they be informed and inspired by the eternal law which is found in God alone. Before we can obey the laws of man in their truest

interpretation our own souls must be under the law of God. There is a letter of obedience, there is also a spirit of obedience. Until we are right in the spirit we cannot be right in the action of life.

There is a law the denial of which amounts to nothing because we find it penetrating the whole scope of life. Divine law is revealed. Man did not make it; man did not dream it; man has but to obey it. There are analogies in nature. Man did not make the firmament, but he gets his light and rain from it. Man did not make the seed which he sows in the earth, out of which come fruits and flowers. The Christian is not at liberty to make little self-centred laws for himself. These are but prejudices, momentary conceits which come and go almost with the changeableness of health and weather. Obedience is the best proof of piety. If we would discover new laws, or enter into the enjoyment of higher conditions, we should obey the old laws and be faithful to immediate responsibilities.

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**"Behold, I make all things new."**—REV. xxi. 5.

The word "make" should be carefully studied. Man makes nothing in the real sense of the term make. Man adapts, or

utilises, or invents, or puts things into new relations ; all this is true, but all his materials are supplied to him by an unseen hand. As to its elements, the telephone was in the Garden of Eden. Chemistry invents nothing, it simply discovers and applies what is already in existence. No man can add a pebble to the magnitude of the earth. It is beyond human power to add one beam to the glory of the sun. God is the only maker, God is the only poet. Human poets are but interpreters of a divine harp ever singing its gospels in the hearing of reverent attention. No true song is new. The heart knows whether the music comes up from eternity and has sovereign rights over human intention, or whether it is a mere jingle made by fantastic art.

Notice that God claims to make all things new. He does not claim to make a few things, or the greatest things, he claims to make "all things" new, from the youngest grass blade to the grandest constellation. Creation is not a process accomplished once for all, nor is regeneration. We should be born again every day into a larger experience and a deeper confidence. Evolution does not apply only to the beginning of things. Whatever truth there is in evolution it pervades the whole education of life.

"If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature." Yet he is

the old identity ! The reformed drunkard is the drunkard in another state so far as individuality is concerned. The man who has been cured of blindness is evolutionised into an apostle of that Healer who restored his sight. Manhood grows. We should not associate the growth of manhood with little maxims of morality, or little codes of ethics, but with the divine purpose, ceaseless, profound, beneficent.

Whilst a great process of renewal is being carried on within the limits of what we call nature, is it right that we ourselves should remain old ? God desires to make us young. There is no old age in immortality. Centuries that come and go in myriads make no impression upon the youthfulness and the bloom of eternity. God offers us a new heart. It is the greatest offer that can be made to man,—it is a new motive, a new sensitiveness, a new capacity of affection. Blessed is the soul who can say, "Old things have passed away, all things have become new."

**"Behold, he calleth Elias."**—  
MARK xv. 35.

Misunderstood to the last !  
Misunderstood from first to last !  
By his mother,—“We have sought  
thee sorrowing.” By his disciples,  
—“It is because we have taken

no bread." By the public,—"How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" By the literal,—"Destroy this temple and I will build it again in three days." By those nearest to him,—"Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." The disciples thought that Jesus spake of Lazarus taking rest in sleep. They would not understand the poetical and ideal term sleep, therefore Jesus was compelled to tell them plainly, "Lazarus is dead." And now the misunderstanding is carried on into the very heart of the last agony,—"Behold, he calleth Elias." They thought Christ was calling for a prophet when he was moaning for God!

From all those instances it is clear (1) that we must become familiar with Christ's *way* of using words. We must get the key of his speech. We must pass from the literal to the ideal,—from the measurable to the infinite. (2) That the way of Christ in the use of words should also be the way of the Church. The Church has literalised and secularised itself too much. The Church should only go down in order that it may bring people up. The Church is not to mix itself with the language and modes of the world so far as to lose its distinctiveness. The very speech of the Church, its very tone and accent, should mark it as heavenly and divine. (3) We should comfort ourselves with the

thought that if the Master has been misunderstood so will his Church. This is an argument which Jesus Christ himself used in seeking to comfort his disciples in view of impending persecution. Precisely in the degree in which we reproduce Christ will we be misunderstood by a sordid world. The motive of Christianity can never be understood by the spirit of worldliness. (4) Beware of getting outside people to interpret your religion. In this case a man who did not understand Christ's language set himself publicly to interpret it. He thought Elio meant Elias. This fact indicates appalling possibilities. People who do not understand the cross may be spending their lives in misinterpreting it. Only those can preach Christ who have gone down with him in the humiliation of the cross, and risen with him in the glory of the resurrection. We do not go to a blind man for a judgment as to the relation and interplay of colours, so we should never ask an atheist to give us an opinion of our faith, or tempt a prayerless man to direct us in the matter of Christian worship. In all these concerns we can act sensible so far as secular affairs demand attention, why should we lose our good sense when we go to darkness to tell us what it thinks of light? The day will come when Christ will be under-

stood, and in that day the whole world will fall down before him and hail him as the Infinite Light, and the Infinite Peace.

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**"Foreordained before the foundation of the world."**—  
I PETER i. 20.

Do not regard the work of Christ as a mere point in time. Many mistakes are made in speaking of the historical Christ, as if Christ did not come until he was born in Bethlehem. The Sonship and the Priesthood of Christ belong to eternity. The cross was set up in the purpose of God before sin was committed. The Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world. It is in such a passage that we come upon the mystery of the eternal Sonship. Religion, as well as mathematics, has its axioms, and all axioms are unchangeable because eternal, and by their very nature belonging to eternity. The mathematician insists that two straight lines cannot enclose a space. The truth which lies behind this axiom was a truth before there was any space to enclose. The same teacher tells us that parallel lines can never form an angle. These are not discoveries with a date. We cannot say that such axioms became true on such and such a

day; they were always true, necessarily true, unchangeably true. An act of parliament is changeable; an axiom can never be amended.

Why should there not be axioms in the spiritual world? in no other world can they be dispensed with, why try to exclude them from the highest world of all? Collect the various passages in which certain truths are declared to be pre-temporal. "The kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," (Matt. xxv. 34); "Blood shed from the foundation of the world" (Luke xi. 50); "Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24); "The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8); "Chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. i. 4). These passages show us that we are not under the fickle rule of chance, but under the benign inspiration and direction of sovereignty. By denying sovereignty we do not escape mystery. It is also true that by adopting chance we offend reason. Goodness is elected to be saved; badness is elected to be lost. This is a law we ourselves adopt. We elect the rejection of bad coin, the outcasting of putrid fruit, the expulsion of infected life.

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**"As the voice of the Almighty God when he speaketh."**—EZEK. x. 5.

The impression which Almighty-ness makes cannot be mistaken. Whether the impression is made by the voice, or the hand, or the eye, or the frown, or the blessing, the result is the same. There are unmistakable credentials not to be fully set forth in words. (1) "What are the wild waves saying?" The imagination is not satisfied by a shallow reply; it cries out, "No, no, it is the voice of the great Creator sounds in that mighty tone." Pharaoh besought Moses that there might be no more mighty thunderings; literally, voices of God. (2) In intercourse: "My sheep hear my voice." There is something in the voice of Christ that cannot be discovered in any other voice. The sheep of the great Shepherd know that voice well and cannot permanently be deceived, even by the most exquisite imitation of its tones. There are many instructive references made in Scripture to the voice and all its mysteries. "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen. iv. 10); "The voice is Jacob's voice" (Gen. xxvii. 22); "Is this thy voice, my son David?" (1 Sam. xxiv. 16); "And after the fire a still small voice" (1 Kings xix. 12). "Al-

mighty in stillness! Silent, but penetrating as conscience! Impalpable, but soothing and inspiring as love! "God thundereth marvellously with his voice" (Job xxxvii. 5). In the new Testament we shall hear of "a marvellous light." "I turned to see the voice that spake with me" (Rev. i. 12); "Thou shalt hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it." What should be our answer to the voice? Should we deny it? contradict it? neglect it? Our reply should always be, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." God's great voice is heard in nature, in providence, in special crises of history. The voice of the Church should be heard through all the uproar and trouble of the world; it should be the voice of inspiration, warning, benediction; he who listens for spiritual voices will hear them. The prophets saw further than common men, and those who wait lovingly upon God will often hear the thrilling tones of his Almighty voice.

**"And Hezekiah wept sore."**—ISA. xxxviii. 3.

In the Bible there are what may be called six classes of tears. We lose much by speaking of almost anything in general and

indiscriminate terms. As light can be parted into constituent beams and colours, so tears may be regarded in various classes.

(1) There are selfish tears. An instance of this we have in the text, "Hezekiah wept sore." He was weeping for his own condition and prospects. His self-importance was altogether exaggerated. Selfishness blots out all great views and responsibilities. A man in tears might be described as tender-hearted, and of a most sympathetic nature, whereas he may only be crying over some trivial personal misfortune, or some unworthy or momentary vexation.

(2) There are mixed tears. "I have mingled my drink with weeping" (Psa. cii. 9). Life is not all joy; tears may drip into wine. There are times when we eat against our will because of the sob that is in our throat. It is possible to see only the champagne and not to detect the tears which are silently trickling into it. Behind all the merriment there may be a cruel grief. If the miseries of life may be regarded as selfish, in some cases, so may the joys of life be misunderstood because their completing tears may not be observed.

(3) There are patriotic tears. "Ye daughters of Israel, weep over Saul" (2 Sam. i. 24). Weep over a vacant throne! Weep because the chief of men is dead!

Death explains, and sometimes even sanctifies, the past. What applies to patriotism may apply also to domestic life, to the pulpit, to commerce, and to the highest social functions. Society must always have its conspicuous representative men. Saul was not a mere person. He represented the total life and dignity of Israel.

(4) There are hopeful tears. "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him" (Psa. cxxvi. 6). Judge nothing before the time. Seed sowing may be done in rough weather. It is not enough to sow seed, we must sow precious seed,—it must be the right seed, sown in the right place, and then even if sown with tears, the tears will be forgotten in the joy of harvest. The school boy may shed tears over his lesson, yet that lesson may be turned into his future income, —the very bread on which he lives. The gate which opens upon the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of joy, is always straight. Difficulty at the beginning may mean success and coronation at the end.

(5) There are sympathetic tears. "Jesus wept." Hezekiah wept sore on his own account; Jesus wept because of the sorrow of others. Sympathy is pre-eminently a Christian grace. There is a

natural sympathy which may hardly be more than a passing emotion ; there is also a sympathy which goes back to first causes, and which enters into the very spirit of the love of God. That there should be any sin in the world ! that death should be a guest in every house ! These should not have been, and certainly would not have been, if man had not fallen into disobedience.

(6) There are needless tears. "Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping" (John xx. 11). Mary need not have wept, for her Lord had risen. If we knew all we would not weep. Certainly we would not weep over our ascended ones. We should know they are not here but are risen. We should take the upper view of things, which is God's view, and should be happy because his will is done. We read many beautiful things in the Scriptures about God's relation to human tears : "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" ; "The Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces" ; "He wipes the tear from every eye." Blessed are they who shed tears of repentance, for it is a godly sorrow working in the direction of life. There is a sorrow which is not unto death.

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"They have consulted together with one consent: they are confederate against thee."

—PSALM xxxiii. 5.

Confederate against ! That is the point which should be fully magnified. The universe has taken up arms against its Creator. All people have combined to put down Omnipotence. How impotent,—how ridiculous ! "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. ii. 1-4.)

This confederacy against God is really a tribute to his power. It means that no single arm can win the battle against heaven. It means that all forces must be consolidated if an effectual blow is to be struck against the crown and sceptre of God. It is forgotten that in such a case the whole is itself but a part. In such a case the integer is a fraction. This confederacy also represents the actual moral state of the world. It is an antagonism against God. "There is none righteous, no, not one." In this confederacy Pilate and Herod

are made friends. But for the Psalmist's anxiety there is no sufficient reason. God may be thought of as replying to him,—“Put up thy sword into the sheath.” What the confederate men were saying was translated into other languages in after centuries,—“Crucify him, crucify him.” The purpose of bad men in all ages has been to get rid of God. We may be atheistic in defence of our very faith. Do not shrink from the paradox that we may be atheistic in defending the existence and the supremacy of God! God will protect himself. God needs no defenders. “The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.”

There is nothing new in opposition to God. It expresses the natural state of the heart. “We have turned every one unto his own way.” Nor is there anything new in distinguished opposition. Many brilliant minds have been arrayed on the side of atheism, or disobedience, or self-idolatry. Wits have hurled their sneers and sarcasms against the cross. Logicians have not shrunk from conclusions that have shamed the simplest evidences of reason. There is nothing constructive in mere opposition. It pulls down, but it never builds up. The greatest argument in illustration of Christianity is the kind of *character* which it inspires and develops. The man is the

argument. The greatest argument in defence of Christianity, as well as in illustration, is *character* “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Jesus Christ challenged opposition to his work, knowing that no opposition could be brought to bear against it.

Do not let us seek to destroy the enemies of Christianity. Truth is not promoted by persecution. “The Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” Destroy opposition by converting it.

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### “To die.”

There are many ways of passing from one state of existence to another. Look at the case of Enoch, concerning whom we simply read, “He was not, for God took him.” We do not know how the process was conducted. Whoever saw the evaporation of a dewdrop? Whoever saw the exact moment when the flower came up into visibility? Take the case of Elijah concerning who we read, “He was carried up.” We think of the chariot of flame and of attendant angels. Imagination pictures a vivid scene of transport. In the case of Enoch there was simply abstraction, in the case of Elijah there was

pompous, glorious visibility and triumph. Take the case of Paul, concerning whom we read that his life was "poured out." He was ready to be offered as a libation. His death was a kind of offering or sacrifice unto God. Take the case of Christ himself, concerning whom we read that "He laid down his life." No man took the life from him, else had his death been a mere murder; he laid it down of himself, and thus his death became a sacrifice and an atonement. Group all these instances and see in what various ways God takes his children to himself: "God took him"; "He was carried up"; "He was poured out"; "He laid down his life." As to the glorious Christ we simply read that "He rose" and that "He went away." Christ never asked to be prayed for. Christ worked with the resources of boundless power. Jesus gives, not receives; Jesus sends, but is not sent. In these distinctions, so exquisite, yet so palpable, I find the best illustrations of the deity of my Lord.

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"Jesus rebuked the winds and the sea."—MATT. viii. 26.

A collection of the "rebukes" of Jesus Christ would show the universality of his power. In this text the winds and the sea repre-

sent all the forces of nature. In the same gospel, ch. xvii. ver. 18, we have another instance of Jesus Christ's rebuking power. According to that verse "Jesus rebuked the devil." Here is control over all the higher malign forces of the universe. It is not for us to bewilder ourselves as to how such forces came into being; there they are, and we must deal with them either in a spirit of atheism, or in a spirit of religious belief. In Mark viii. 33 Jesus "rebuked Peter." This is an instance of personal mastery as well as of personal criticism. Jesus Christ was always the Master. There is a personal rebuke for every man who will submit himself to the criticism of Christ. Neither preacher nor hearer, neither parent nor child, can escape the judgment of divine righteousness. In Mark ix. 25 Jesus "rebuked the foul spirit." Here is sovereignty over all the meaner malignities that affect human life. The term "foul spirits" covers a large arrear of mystery. There are foul spirits of passion, intemperance, self-indulgence, obduracy, ingratitude, and the like. The great lesson throughout is that only the divine can overthrow the diabolic. "My grace is sufficient for thee," is the great inspiration of the spiritual struggler. It is not for us to begin at the point of rebuking the winds. Our course lies in the other direction. When we have rebuked all

the evil that is in us we may attain to such supremacy of holiness as may give us some control over the forces of nature. To rebuke is, literally, to set a weight upon ; to crush down by superiority of weight all evil forces. Mark the consistency of the power of Christ. Some men are strong in one direction, but pitifully weak in another. Not in signs only and miracles, but in speech Jesus was supreme,—“His word was with power.”

These instances refer to Jesus Christ, and it is to be noted that precisely the same “rebukes” are ascribed to God in the Old Testament. This is a point of supreme suggestiveness. Take instances :—“The foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke” (Ps. xviii. 15); “At my rebuke I dry up the sea” (Isa. l. 2); “He rebuked the Red sea also” (Ps. cvi. 9); “The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan” (Zech. iii. 2); “I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes” (Mal. iii. 11).

Compare these “rebukes” with the “rebukes” of Jesus Christ and it will be seen that Jesus covered the whole of this ground. Is there nothing suggestive in this fact? Can any mere man cover the ground, and the whole ground, covered by Omnipotence? We cannot evade the fact that line by line Jesus Christ goes over the ground of the Old Testament

“rebukes,” and that step by step Jesus Christ accompanies the movement of the original energy. I have no hesitation in saying to Jesus, “My Lord and my God.” I joyfully believe him when he says, “I and my Father are one.”

We have so to live as to escape just rebuke. We are to be “Sons of God without rebuke.” It is next to impossible to still the evil tongue, yet in the strength of the Holy Spirit we should move in that direction, in the hope that through the sufficiency of divine grace we may be more than conquerors.

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“And there came a man from Baal-shalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat. And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the Lord, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof. So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the Lord.”—  
2 KINGS iv. 42-44.

Here is a great doctrine of Providence. We move in certain directions without being able to explain either the motive or the higher aspects of the occasion.

(1) God *proves* men: he creates social conditions for them, and sets their wits to work as to their adjustment and satisfaction. Interrogation plays a great part in every division of human economy. How can I feed so great a number? What shall I do at such a crisis? How is it possible to meet this difficulty? Such questions should not be considered fretful, but should be accepted as creating so many opportunities for the application of true statesmanship.

(2) God *cares* for men. He will not permit the waves of distress to go beyond a certain "hitherto."

He knows all that is proceeding in the world, and is administering the whole estate of human affairs upon a plan which could not be understood by human minds if revealed all at once. (3) God

knows what he himself will do with men. He asks us the question that we may realise our ignorance and our weakness. Where is the lamb? Can dead men live? How is the world to be redeemed? How can present tumult be ruled into ultimate order? "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (John vi. 5). He himself knew what he would do. Can these dry bones live? He himself knew what he

would do. Is it lawful to pay tribute? He himself knew what he would do. That is our all-sufficing answer to the mysteries of nature and life.

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"Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back."—ISA. xxxviii. 17.

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."—PSALM ciii. 12.

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting."—PSALM ciii. 17.

"As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy."—PSALM ciii. 11.

"The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found."—JER. 1. 20.

(1) These passages are consistent with all that is revealed of God. The Bible knows nothing of an incomplete deity. Look at the grandeur of the scale which is here indicated. How far is the east from the west? What is the exact period indicated by the words "from everlasting to everlasting"? How high is the heaven above the earth? The whole action is worthy of the majesty and glory of the infinite

**Creator.** He who makes the clouds the dust of his feet, and who steps from one horizon to another, and sits on the circle of eternity, and names the stars one by one, must in his moral government be as great as in his creative sovereignty. (2) These passages are an infinite comfort to the contrite sinner. He can soliloquise thus: My sins are behind God's back; who can measure that infinite distance? My sins are as far away as the east is from the west; can any man lay a tape line on the immeasurable, and state the distance in plain figures? The mercy of which I am the subject is not a little mercy, a day long, that mercy is from everlasting to everlasting; sooner could the firmament rain down all its stars and planets, sooner could the hills uproot themselves and flee away, than the mercy of the Lord could be measured or exhausted. We are the subjects of an infinite mercy. "The river of God is full of water." My iniquities are hid, my sins are covered, and when God shuts, who can open? We must get rid of the idea that God makes compromises with the sinner, or offers the sinner an inadequate pardon, or makes such reserves in his forgiveness as to cause the sinner the pain of un-

certainty or distress. "God will abundantly pardon." (3) These passages are a fatal rebuke to fault finders and sin seekers. "The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah they shall not be found." With what wonderful completeness does the Gracious Father work! Who can go behind the track of God and find anything that he has left behind. My soul, take comfort that when thou art forgiven no man can bring up the past against thee. God destroys all the evidence of thy guilt. Thou didst banish thyself by daily sin into a desolate wilderness, but so rich is the mercy of God that he has turned that wilderness into a garden of roses.

Let us claim our privileges in Christ! We are not merely half forgiven, the grace of Christ has penetrated the whole desolation of our iniquity, so that now barrenness is turned into summer-like abundance, and the night of grief has given place to the morning of spiritual joy. There are no ifs and buts in the divine forgiveness. "Go in peace, thy faith hath made the whole,"—not partly whole, not temporarily whole, not grudgingly and uncertainly whole,—the wholeness is complete, and by its very completeness it is a memorial unto God.

## THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

Verse 1. "The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth."

Elders have earned a right to speak. There is a maturity that is not of age only. Some men come into full possession of faculty and influence long before others. When old age is but another word for spirituality, and high attainment in grace, then in very deed are grey hairs a crown of glory. In this instance it is age that speaks, and holy wisdom that lifts up its hand in blessing. John here claims the larger fellowship which was claimed also by Jesus Christ, the fellowship of those who are in the truth. Original and lasting kinship can only be found in intellectual and moral sympathy. "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." If we translate "in the truth" by the mere adverb "truly" the meaning is in no sense impaired or degraded. We can only live truly in the truth. No truthful man can love what is untruthful. There is a sensitiveness of soul which knows a lie even when it

is afar off. This verse is a blossom of affection. Not only is Gaius loved, he is "wellbeloved." Not only is he personally esteemed, but he is truly loved, and loved for the truth's sake.

Verse 2. "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

Here the usual standard is inverted. Instead of making the body the standard by which to measure the prosperity of the soul, the elder makes the soul the standard of the body's weal. Gaius had a soul which throbbed with double life. All his perceptions, all his intellectual endowments, all his emotional powers, in short, the entire spiritual man, was in a state of intensest vitality. His spirit was as a mountain-top which catches the earliest glance of the morning. He was in perpetual sympathy with his redeeming Master, and the triumph of his soul in great principles, and in width of moral life, was such as to throw the vigour of his body entirely into the shade. Happy the man whose soul-life is greater than his bodily vigour!

The soul is the man. When that prospers, adversity is not to be heeded; such adversity is but as the withered leaf amid the pomp of Lebanon, or an expiring spark in the presence of a summer sun. "Above all things" the "elder" wished this man a prosperity in external circumstances equal to his moral condition. This is beginning at the right end. Poor indeed is his notion of prosperity who imagines that the advancement of the soul should be measured by the progress of the body. Are bones to be set against convictions? Is the dying blood to be in apposition to moral sympathies, or the throbbing flesh to be regarded as furnishing a standard by which to measure the vitality of the eternal spirit? Surely not. That is the right idea of manhood which is founded upon a recognition of the soul's capability for self-expansion and the advancement of the Creator's glory. With many men the principal question of life is one of bodily vigour, mere physical force and energy. Some men, indeed, would appear to be all body and no soul; they are living machines, they are locomotive automatons, they are moral corpses.

Verse 3. "For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth."

Beautiful is the picture which

is presented in this verse. Here we have brethren engaging in Christian intercourse, ascertaining each other's moral condition, and taking a deep and living interest in all that pertains to the education of the soul in the faith of Christ. These brethren go to the "elder" and report with deepest joy what they have found of truth, and love, and trust, in the well-beloved Gaius. This seems to have been the burden of their communication. They speak principally of the soul; they tell of its growth, of its increasing beauty, of its augmenting power for doing good; and it would appear that their testimony is borne, not with a grudging and ungrateful spirit, but with a cordiality which abundantly testifies to the richness of their own graces and the grandeur of their own character. This is a fine test of moral manhood. It requires a great man to speak with full praise of the growth of another soul. There is too much a tendency in human nature to depreciate and modify the excellencies which adorn the character of others, so that when we find men disposed to give the fullest credit for the growth and sincerity of their brethren in the faith, we may accept such witness as a proof that they themselves are firmly rooted in great principles, and are more and more resembling him whose name they bear, and whose perfections it is the

business of their lives to illustrate.

In the fourth verse "the elder" seems to warm into enthusiasm. He speaks not only of joy, but of "greater joy;" he declares that he knows of no greater joy than to hear that his children walk in truth. He takes no low view of their condition. With him it is not a question of material property, of the possession of immense estates, of the attainment of illustrious renown; but entirely a question of life in the truth, and of that love evermore becoming deeper, purer, and stronger. The venerable man seems to have triumphed over life and time and sense; all the pomp of the material world is with him like the flickering of a passing light; and the vastest possessions of property are mean as a handful of dust.

Verses 5, 6, 7. "Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church: whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well: because that for his name's sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles."

Gaius is here represented as a man given to hospitality. He was willing to testify that not only was the truth in his heart as a creed, but that it operated in his life as a power. There are many who are orthodox in creed, but who in life are guilty of the blackest heresy.

Any orthodoxy which is not sustained by a life consecrated to doing good is a name only; it is a form without power, and reprobated by all good men. Gaius was great in good works; nor were his good works confined to the "brethren" only, but in connection with the brethren he was hospitable also to "strangers." There is nothing so inclusive as Christian charity. It would encompass the world. Like the sunshine and the rain, it exerts an influence upon all, and would save all with the salvation that is in Christ. We speak of "strangers" indeed, and yet how can they be strangers who are one in Jesus? They may be strangers so far as the outer man is concerned, but instantly that they begin to commune with each other respecting the great subjects of being and destiny, the strangeness of the outer man is forgotten in the attachments and solicitudes of the heart. Strangers there ought not to be in the Church. Our Christianity has done little for us unless it has completely purified all our relations, and permeated the common intercourse of our life. The Church is guilty in this matter of not attempting a wider fraternisation amongst its individual constituents. We do not open our hearts with sufficient candour and explicitness to one another on the greatest themes which can engage

our understanding and inflame our affection. If men would talk with one another in a plain, sensible, and earnest manner respecting the things which belong to their peace, they would instantly feel that much which was apparently angular, repulsive, and ungenial, was only such in imagination, and not in reality. This confiding, affectionate intercourse would dispel all our prejudices, as the morning sun dispels the mists which enwrap the shoulders of the mountain and conceal the richness of the valley. The elder exhorts Gaius to bring forward the brethren and the strangers in a godly sort, or, as it is rendered in the margin, in a manner worthy of God. See, then, how lofty is the standard of hospitality which the elder erects. These brethren and strangers are not merely to be brought forward, their bringing forward is not to be conducted in a niggardly or stinting manner, but they are to be looked at as the children of God, the heralds of a heavenly kingdom, and are to be treated as the representatives of the Infinite King, and not in any lower capacity. When men make God the standard of their appreciation of one another, the little inequalities, and what may be termed blemishes, of their life will be forgotten or disregarded, as the scars upon the earth are concealed amid the richness and the beauty of an

abundant summer. These men are commended to the confidence and care of Gaius on two accounts; first, that because for God's sake they had gone forth; they were influenced by no inferior motives; their mission was derived immediately from God Himself; His name was their inspiration, His promises their trust, and His glory their single aim. In addition to this, it is specially recorded that they "take nothing of the Gentiles." They were men of independence and disinterestedness of heart; they came not forth for the purpose of self-aggrandizement in any way whatsoever; they were self-oblivious, so far as this world was concerned, and were entirely consecrated to the service of the Kingdom which cannot be moved. Had they been merely accumulators of property, had they gone forth for the promotion of their own transitory interests, no such commendation as this would have been associated with their names; but seeing that they went forth on behalf of the truth alone, the benediction of the good rested upon their head, and an open door was seen before them in the providence of an approving God.

Verse 8. "We therefore ought to receive such that we might be fellow helpers to the truth."

There is here the recognition of a principle which is too often

lost sight of in the prosecution of Christ's service. It is here set forth, that he who does a good deed to the brethren, does through them actually serve the truth itself. Affecting indeed are the representations made again and again in the sacred writings with regard to the relations of Christ to his people. He says, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me;" and John in this verse shows that hospitality rendered to the representatives of Christ, is considered as a service rendered to Christ's gospel. He who helps the good, helps truth. A cup of cold water even, given in a right spirit, has a bearing upon the extension of Christ's kingdom on the earth. Who then is there amongst us who will plead inability to serve the truth? You disclaim the possession of eloquence; you disown the power of influencing vast masses of men; you mourn over your feebleness in divers ways; but let it be known for the joy and encouragement of all, that even a sign of sympathy may help the truth, and that the smallest gift of love may advance the interests of the eternal kingdom.

Verses 9, 10. "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious

words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

We now turn from the good to the bad. From Gaius to Diotrephes is like a step from the torrid to the frigid zone. They are members of the same Church; they are bearers of the same Divine name, yet they possess not the same spirit, nor do they exemplify the same truth before the world. The race of Gaius is not extinct; and, alas, the tribe of Diotrephes is still on the earth. In the tenth verse, the venerable "elder" displays his great personal courage. He was not the man to wink in a cowardly manner in the presence of a prating pretender like Diotrephes. In the presence of such a man he had more than a lion's intrepidity; and though his voice was tremulous with the feebleness of age, yet his words were marked by the strength of an energy which nothing could quell. We spoke just now of his gentleness, and in this verse he gives the manifestation of a power which no opposition could quail, or which time itself was unable to impair. The expression which the apostle uses is simple and terse; viz., "prating against us" with malicious words. Who then is safe from the strife of tongues? In what pavilion can the holiest of men be enclosed so as to be able to defy the shafts

of malice? When men in the same Church revile one another; when men not only revile each other, but "prate" against apostles themselves with "malicious words," their opposition may be the terror of little spirits, but it excites the contempt and provokes the indignation of all who love "the truth." This Diotrephes was altogether an impracticable man. Not only would he not work himself, but he prevented others who were disposed to do good. A dog in the manger, indeed! Such dogs are beyond the power of killing! They are smitten; they are muzzled; they are barred in with iron, and the whip of indignation falls heavily upon them, yet they live: where they cannot bite they bark, and where they cannot devour they growl and snarl.

Do not imagine that you are men of influence simply because you have the power of destruction. It is the lowest power, is this power of hindering good movements and abusing good men. Destructiveness calls not for the exercise of any genius; an insect may destroy a flower, but no angel can restore its beauty. There are awkward men in the Church; men, who if they have any grace at all, have so much of the devil in them still that their grace has but little control over them. Good men should resist such persons. It may be very pleasant to talk of dealing with them in a spirit

of charity, and being gentle with them, and forbearing and kind. Up to a certain point this is perfectly right: there is a work which compassion has to do; there is a sphere in which pity may be called into active exercise; at the same time we are to mark those who cause divisions and offences, and to avoid them; and there is a certain class of men on whom pity has no effect, and compassion is lost; and the only thing which can be done is to "deliver them over unto Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme."

In the eleventh verse, the apostle associates the name of Diotrephes with that which is "evil;" saying, "Beloved, follow not that which is evil." Terrible is the conjunction of any human name with that of "evil." It marks an alliance with the devil; it traces an immediate connection with perdition itself. Better not to have lived than to be connected with all that is low and grovelling in the universe. The name of man was intended to be associated with the name of God, and consequently with all that is pure, holy, and sublime, in being and in thought; but here is a man, who in the very Church of the Saviour has a name which is overshadowed by evil, and has a reputation which causes grief to the spirit of a man who is the apostle of God. See then how

possible it is to have a name in the Church, and not only a name, but a pre-eminent position, and yet to be destitute of all that can endear the character to others, and all that can insure happiness for the person himself. The apostle does not hesitate to lay down a great principle which involves all classes of men; that great principle is this, "He that doeth good is of God, but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." This principle may be safely carried through all the arrangements of Christian organisation. By this rule men stand or fall. Not the sayings of a man, but the work of a man is to be the test of his moral condition before Heaven. He who does good, how obscure soever may be his name, is a child of God, destined to be a crowned king in the higher spheres, and to be robed priest among the angels; but he that doeth evil, how proud soever the eminence on which he is exalted, is a child of the devil, who, from the very mountain of his elevation, shall be driven off into an obscurity dark as midnight,—into an abyss profound as hell. It is of supreme consequence to have such great principles by which to estimate human character. They relieve us from all embarrassment, and compel us, in duty to that which is true and pure, to exact from all men that work which is brilliant with the image and aspect of God.

Now a gleam of sunshine flashes across the old man's page. He turns from Diotrephes to Demetrius—and the turning resembles a motion from a side of a mountain which is covered with deepest shades, to the side which is lighted up with the brightness of a summer sun. "Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true." In the same Church, then, we have three representative men. First of all there is Gaius, spiritually noble and generously inclined to the most catholic hospitality; next to him stands Diotrephes, occupying a bad pre-eminence, and throwing a deadly shade over all that is beautiful and flourishing in the Christian community; and adjoining him is Demetrius, whose character compels the homage of the best man in the Christian Church. His name was as ointment poured forth. All observers beheld the symmetry and strength of his manhood, and all listeners were compelled to acknowledge that his words were words of truth, derived immediately from Him who is the fountain of all verity. As Diotrephes and evil were almost synonymous terms, so Demetrius and truth are almost equivalent expressions. Mark the difference; abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good! Is there not too much fastidious-

ness on this matter of openly speaking out concerning the good and the evil alike? We find that the apostles frankly declared their opinions of the various men who composed the communities which they visited, and with which they communicated. The Apostolic writings abound with complimentary recognitions of character; many a glowing eulogium was written by the Pauline pen, and many words of graceful commendation were penned by the apostle whose third epistle we are now reading. This is as it ought to be. We are bound, as occasion may require, to let men know exactly what we think of them; there should be no stinting of the good word, and, when circum-

stances require it, we should not shrink from the unpleasant duty of uttering the word of reprobation and dislike. The interests of truth are higher than the interests of feeling; and he who most sternly and perseveringly upholds the kingdom of truth will, in the long run, be found to do most for the purification of affection and the simplification of the various relationships which subsist among Christian men. Honour to the man who uses the frank word, and disgrace be upon the head of him who dishonours his convictions by the pronunciation of undeserved praise or the withholding of the word of honour where it is due.

### THE SONG OF THANKFULNESS.

**“I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.”—PSALM xiii. 6.**

Songs should be based upon reason. In a true song the words are of as much importance as the music. Some people are satisfied if the song has nothing but tone; other, and better, critics, insist upon hearing the words as well as the tone. In the instance of the text the Psalmist not only

declares that he will sing, but he lays down the reason why he would bring his song unto the Lord—“because he hath dealt bountifully with me.” The same thought applies along the whole line of Christian evidence and experience. The intelligent Christian always has a reason for what he does. Is it service? The reason is, “the love of Christ constraineth us.” Is it help rendered even in individual cases as from one man to another? The reason is, “in the name of a disciple.” Is it suffering? The reason is, we

are crucified with Christ, and the assurance is that if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. Nothing is done out of mere impulse, or transient humour; the whole Christian life is founded upon history, and fact, and manifold reality.

The keyword of the reason given, is the word "bountifully." There is a point at which prose rises into poetry. There is a point at which speech is insufficient, so it must be carried forward into music. Not only has the Lord done something for the Psalmist, he has actually dealt with him "bountifully;" he has filled his vessel with wine until the wine overflows; he has crowded his barns with wheat until there is not space enough to receive it; the Lord has not only given up to the point of contentment, but up to the point of overflow and redundancy. What, then, could the Psalmist do? He takes the only rational and logical course that is open to him; he opens his mouth in grateful song. It was always the way with the Psalmist. "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" The Psalmist declares the blessings and compassions of God to be more in number than the sands upon the seashore; he will therefore sing, and sing rapturously, and endeavour thus to reach the level of the divine munificence. We should have more singing if

we had a truer appreciation of divine mercy. We are apt to think that God only appears on great occasions; we forget that every breath we draw is a distinct blessing from God. The heart beats with life because God sustains it by love. As for our eyes, do they not feast on beauty? Who spread a covering of loveliness on the face of the earth? Who is responsible for the foliage and blossoming of the landscape and the garden? Who spread forth the heavens with all their infinitude of beauty? To whom do we owe our reason, our health, our friends, and all the faculties by which we acquire substance and influence? If we will think religiously upon all these things it will simply be impossible to avoid the holy song, the ever rising and thrilling anthem of thankfulness. Who can sufficiently praise God for the gift of hope—cheerfulness, vivacity, assurance that all will be well at last? It is true that our circumstances vary, but life is infinitely deeper than environment. The poor need not envy the rich; who is the poor man? Is it he who has little money but bright hope? Or is it he who has ample resources but is without desire or appreciation? Who has the library? The non-reader may have the books, but the careful student has the literature and the intellectual revelation. Who has

the landscape? Only the poet, the idealist, the interpreter.

One of two totally different views of life may be taken. We may occupy the standpoint of atheism, or we may occupy the standpoint of faith. It is impossible for atheism to sing, that is a fatal objection to this unblest creed. Negation has no music. Negation is always looking down into its own emptiness. It is equally certain that faith cannot be silent. Silence belongs to atheism; song belongs to faith. This is not a matter of artistic sentiment, it is a matter of the deepest interest. It belongs essentially to the very nature of faith that it must express itself in song. Faith lives in large spaces. Faith is at home in every quarter of the radiant universe. Faith is not a limited quantity; it is a quantity that admits of continual and immeasurable increase; hence our earnest prayer, "Lord, increase our faith." Distrust any form of religion which does not require the aid of holy song. The Old Testament saints could never get music enough for the expression of their feelings. They would have trumpets, and cymbals, and harps, and organs, and all other possible auxiliaries to assist in heightening and prolonging their grateful song. Your faith is only a creed if it does not sing unto the Lord; that is to say, it is only so many items

assented to by the cold intellect; it is not the thrilling and inspiring influence of a sanctified emotion.

Christ calls for a singing Church; a happy, jubilant, faithful assembly. Surely we have occasion enough for spiritual music. We are called upon to sing with the spirit and with the understanding, and we are encouraged to help one another by hymns and psalms and spiritual songs. If any man ask us why we sing so loudly and so thrillingly, we may reply, "If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" All the promises of Christ are in favour of song. "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you." "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Jesus has promised that where he is, there shall also his disciples be. He has gone to prepare a place for those who love him. The Lord will suddenly come to his temple. There must, therefore, be no unbelieving silence in the Church, that would be out of keeping with the daily providence which crowns our life with loving-kindness. We will sing unto the Lord for he hath dealt bountifully with us, and we will praise his holy name for ever and ever.

"Nathanael saith unto him,  
Whence knowest thou me?"  
—JOHN i. 48.

This text introduces us to what may be called the Outside friends of Jesus Christ. We are familiar with Peter, James, and John, and the rest of the twelve, and we are disposed, in forgetfulness rather than in intention, to confine Jesus Christ's interest to a select few. From beginning to end Jesus Christ sought to rebuke this spirit of exclusiveness. "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold; them also must I bring." "They shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves shall be thrust out." In discoursing upon the Outside friends of Jesus let it be said at the very outset that there is no merit in mere outsideness. Some men cultivate a habit of oddness in the matter of not connecting themselves with any Christian communion. There is an immoral eccentricity. We should always take care to save better men than we are ourselves the pain of needless reproach. With this reservation we are at liberty to look upon the Outside friends of Jesus as objects of peculiar interest. Here is the case of Nathanael. He did not know that Jesus cared for him. Probably he was not aware

that Jesus was conscious of his existence. This is evident from the very question which constitutes the text. Nathanael had come with a prejudice—"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Jesus knows all men from the beginning. He knows whence they come and whither they go. In this case as in all others he is the Son of man. We may be pleasing Christ without knowing it. Some who are apparently far off may in reality be near at hand. "The first shall be last, and the last shall be first." Many men are kept from Christ by the spell of a peculiar whim or an ignorant prejudice. This was the case of Nathanael. He thought, perhaps, more of Nazareth than of Jesus Christ.

Another of the Outside friends of Jesus was Zacchaeus. He was known amongst men as chief of the tax-gatherers, and rich. Probably he was both feared and despised. But Jesus Christ declared him to be "a son of Abraham." Jesus Christ always takes the best view of every heart. He seizes our prayers at their highest point, and answers them in their extremest importunity and urgency. You may be a son of Abraham and yet not know it! Invite Jesus Christ to your house and he will tell you who you are. Jesus Christ reveals every man to himself. If there is in you any germ of godliness

**Jesus Christ will recognise and expand it.**

Another of the Outside friends of Jesus was Nicodemus. True he came to Jesus by night, but the greater truth is that he came. We make too much of the timidity of Nicodemus, and too little of the fact of his reverent coming. Some of you may be only able to come under this or that incidental qualification, but Jesus will not taunt you with your coming "by night," he will receive you with welcomes, and expound his kingdom to your listening and grateful hearts.

The fourth of the Outside friends of Jesus was Lazarus. With Lazarus may be connected his sisters Martha and Mary. They were not in the nominal register of Christ's adherents. We do not hear that they were members of a formal organisation of disciples. Nevertheless they loved Jesus, and Jesus loved them all.

What is our relation to Jesus Christ? We must sustain some relation to the Son of God. We are friends, or enemies; we are zealous or indifferent; we are inquirers, or we are uninterested; we care for Jesus, or we reject him. The greatest question which any man can put to his own heart is, What is my relation to the Son of God?

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### Baffled Language.

It is a profitable exercise to

watch how, now and again, the sacred writers come to an utter standstill for want of adequate words. If we are under the impression that there are words enough to express all ideas, we shall soon find how far wrong we are if the sacred writers are to be taken as guides and instances. There is hardly a line of human thought which does not end in perplexity as to sufficiency of words. Whatever the subject is, the words fail to carry it to its utmost expression as conceived by the religious thinker.

(1) Take the instance of time and we come upon such expressions as "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. xc. 2). Here language is simply baffled. It can, so to say, only point in the direction of its unutterable meaning. Take also the expression "for ever." That is a confession of weakness on the part of language. Who can tell where that duration ends? It is endless; and the very fact of its endlessness makes it as mysterious, in its own way, as is the constitution of the Godhead. One poet went still further, saying not only "for ever," but saying, "for ever and ever." So the mind was left without an adequate supply of words. The words panted for want of strength, and fell behind, while the imagination pursued its busy course.

(2) Take as another illustration

the instance of light. The Apostle wished to set forth the brightness of the dazzling presence by which he was overpowered on his way to Damascus ; he described it as "a light above the brightness of the sun." The sun was his highest symbol of splendour, but there was something which quenched even that burning glory. We read of "a marvellous light." This is another instance of baffled language. Light is always marvellous to the poet's eye. Light cannot be imagined. We sometimes think we can imagine what a gloomy landscape would become when the sun shone upon it. But such imagination is utterly impossible. What, then, must be that light which quenches the noonday ? What must be that splendour before which the glowing constellations fade away as if in humiliation and dismay ?

(3) We find language utterly exhausted when it comes to describe the love of God. The greatest Apostle can only indicate its depth and its quality, by saying, "the love of God that passeth knowledge." The same Apostle exclaims, "O the depth !" The judgment of God is declared to be unsearchable. The understanding of God is not to be found out unto perfection. The mercies of the Lord are more in number than the sands upon the sea-shore. Thus language exhausts all its symbols, and exhales all its

rhetoric, and then perishes as if overcome by its own inadequacy and uselessness.

(4) How useless language is in attempting to express the greatness of God's gift when he sent Christ into the world. The Apostle speaks of God's "unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. ix. 15). The same Apostle refers to the "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph. iii. 8).

(5) The same applies to the whole action of divine Providence. "How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. xi. 33). "Clouds and darkness are round about him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne" (Ps. xcvi. 2). Who knoweth the way of the Lord ? "God is great and we know him not."

(6) Religious emotion supplies another instance of baffled language. The Apostle Peter speaks of "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter i. 8). Emotion is obliged to take refuge in the use of exclamations or interjections ; as, for instance, "O the depth !" The interjections should not be despised, for they may express the inexpressible, or point to depths in the soul which no language can fathom.

(7) Take the instance of God's ability. What language can set it forth ? The Apostle was unable adequately to represent it, for he said, "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask

or think." There is to be no limit to prayer. The largest petitions we can bring are nothing, and less than nothing, when compared with the unsearchable riches of Christ. For vastness compare the earth with the sky before you compare the words of supplication with the infinite bounty of the divine grace. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. iv. 9). God's measure is not begrimed, or a question of literal accuracy; it is a question of generosity, overflowingness, unspeakable redundancy, "heaped up, pressed down, running over."

(8) When the Apostle would describe the heavenly vision, and the final reward following upon affliction well-borne, he soon comes to silence for want of adequate words. He describes the saints' portion as "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." It is weight upon weight of glory! World upon world of splendour!

Mark the practical conclusion to which this reflection points. If we are dealing with eternal duration, marvellous light, the love that passeth knowledge, the unspeakable gift, the unsearchable riches, the unfathomable Providence, the joy unspeakable, the unimaginable resources, the eternal weight of glory, how impossible it is to settle the subjects thus indicated by any process of merely

verbal controversy! We shall make a great gain in spiritual education if we keep in mind the limited use of human words. We cannot express the infinite by the finite. The ladder of our words cannot reach the noonday of God's glory. Nor should men be discouraged when they feel themselves unable adequately to express their religious convictions and emotions. Some men have severely chided themselves because they have been unable to tell with fluency, and with completeness of expression, all the mysteries of grace which have shone upon the forgiven soul. They do not know that their very inability may be an instance of the reality of their divine life. God gives to the soul "a peace that passeth all understanding." Here is the same idea, the idea of baffled language! Let understanding represent the intellectual nature, and the figure will be that of an immeasurable lake of peace lying beyond the limited bounds of the intellect. Even the arithmetician is able to set down numbers, line upon line of figures, which he cannot express in words, and even if he could express them in words, the words themselves would so transcend the imagination as to be utterly futile. Thus from point to point we come upon the ineffable,—the unspeakable. We are not, however, to suppose that religion is mere reverie, or

contemplation, or transcendentalism. We come back from the mountain of vision that we may plough the valley, and help the poor, and lead the blind. Always suspect the reverie that limits the area, or cools the enthusiasm of beneficence. We shall know that we have been most surely with God when our heart is stirred by a holy impulse to do more and more for the salvation of man.

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**"They gathered manna every morning."**—EXOD. xvi. 21.

The one thing which is very hard for me to do is to live no more than one day at a time. I want to live whole years all at once, and God will not let me do this. I cannot eat bread for two days, yet I have had all the bread I need. Why not trust God for all that is to come? No one was to gather two days' manna, for to have done so would have shown that there was no real trust in God's love and God's care. If a thief stole manna for more than one day he did not gain anything by it, because what was more than enough was spoiled and lost before the next day came. Thank God for that. If God did not keep the reins in his own hands we should drive swiftly to ruin. Yet we must take care not to put any part of this high thought to a bad use, for there

is a sense in which we must think of all the time that has yet to come. But how is this to be done? We think best of to-morrow by taking care of to-day; by making a wise use of seed-time we best prepare for harvest; and by acting well in this life we most surely make ourselves ready for the world to come. O my poor restless soul, quiet thyself in God who loves thee. What does all thy fret and care and fear come to? O rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Christ has done little for thee if thou canst not trust him for each day's light and bread and strength. Christ never fails. Let the battle come, Christ will win. Let death draw near, Christ will tread him under foot. Let heaven vanish and earth disappear, Christ will create new heavens and a new earth, passing in glory and beauty all thou hast ever seen. If I look over my life to see where God has failed, I cannot find one breach of faith, or one lapse of love. Soul of mine, lay hold of this fact, and thou shalt have true and lasting peace.

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**"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not."**—GEN. xxviii. 16.

Thus in dreams we see the larger relation of things, dreams

are telescopes. We need not trouble ourselves as to the literal fulfilment of dreams ; it is enough for the present to know that they bring within our imagination possibilities that lie beyond the limit of mere reason. What a sense of power and liberty we realise in dreams ! We outfly the stars ; we recall the dead ; we annihilate the hindrances of space ; it is better to magnify the suggestions of those dream-experiences than to treat them as idle excitements. They point to the freedom of disembodiment. If at first they make us afraid, afterwards our fear is exchanged for a great comfort and a sweet assurance of safety. Fear often prepares the way for joy. Sometimes it constrains us to pray. When we cling to the yielding grass as we hang above an immeasurable abyss, we cannot but cry out for help, and so give free play to the instincts we have tried to stifle or pervert. When we awake out of our dreams, it should be to work out more faithfully and lovingly the will of God. Dreams should be the inspiration of realities. Who shall say which is the reality and which is the dream ? What if facts, as we call them, are nightmares, and dreams, as we call them, are the true certainties ? We are to walk by faith, and not by sight—by the inner vision, and not by the eyes of the body. This is a great mystery, only to

be understood by the power of God the Holy Ghost, and to be realised gradually as life discloses its deepest needs and holiest affinities. Father, show me thyself in many dreams, so that on my awaking I may know how truly and graciously thou dost fill and glorify all things. Give me to know how near thou art ! Thy nearness is my security.

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**“Thou visitest him every morning.”—JOB vii. 18.**

Yet man's eyes are often holden so that he does not see the divine visitor. The visit is always paid, but the Visitor is seldom seen. How does God visit his children ? Is there no trace of his majesty in the sun ? Is there no hint of his condescension in the table spread in the wilderness of time ? Is there no proof of his nearness in the love which gives home its tenderest charm ? Blessed is the man who is deeply read in the Bible of events. Such a man is secure against the influence of superstition, because what he knows of God is balanced by what he knows of man ; the light of his fancy shines within the lamp of his facts. Notice, God visits us “every morning,” yet it is only now and then that we really know this in our inmost hearts. We who might have daily blessing are content with occasional communion. This is to

our loss and to our shame. See, this morning beauty may be to our faith and hope as the very face of God! The dew that glistens on the flowers may be as tears of his gentle pity. Morning is meant to be a gospel to us—news from a better land, a call from the eternal home. In the morning I will direct my prayer unto the Lord, and I will lift to heaven a look of eager expectation. The morning makes the day. When the first hour is one of prayer, the last is sure to be one of praise. The enemy will also visit me every morning with some new temptation, some larger bribe, some deadlier promise; he has access even to my dreams, and he can so come to my imagination as to be mistaken for a friend. Lord, keep me this day without sin. Lord, make this day the brightest I have ever seen. Send thine angels to guard me in this day's battle. Fill my mind with noble thoughts, and teach my tongue the sacred speech of wisdom. Saviour of the world, into thy mighty arms I fall, for there alone can any man be for ever safe.

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**"O Thou that searchest the heart and triest the reins of the children of men, search us and try us, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."**

"The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." Who can hide himself from God? Though the rocks fall upon us, and the mountains cover us, and the darkness doth enclose us in its most secret places, yet dost thou search and try us as a flame of fire. All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do. Thou art a Spirit, and thou searchest the spirits of men. Who then can stand before God, and who dare say, "Let the Most High look upon me"? In thy holiness we see our own guilt; in the light of thy countenance we realise the darkness of our own way. Thou dost set our secret sins in the light of thy countenance, and thine heart doth go after us when we pursue that which is evil. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. We have come to say, "God be merciful to us sinners through Jesus Christ our infinitely sufficient Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sin." Thou wilt hear this prayer; thou wilt allow it to prevail mightily with thee, for thou canst not turn away from thy dear son and the presence of his cross. We humbly beseech thee to search us as with the candle of the Lord. Reveal us unto ourselves, that we may know ourselves as we really are. When thou hast afflicted us and humbled us and expelled

from our heart every vain hope of self-emancipation, do thou bring us with the infinite graciousness of thy love to know the mystery of the liberty of the sons of God. Amen.

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**“When I consider thy heavens.”**—PSALM viii. 3.

Even when I merely look at them how wonderful they are ! I look at that sky one moment and it is an infinite glory—a very heaven of splendour—mounting above all visible things with a glory that would abase me with its haughtiness but for the tender warmth which comforts me whilst I look ; then I look again, and that same sky is one boundless cloud—a very wilderness—a very embodiment of despair ; then again, and behold the moon placid as a contented mother, and all the white stars like little children gathered round her in tremulous and eager joy. O wondrous sky —like my life both in gladness and gloom ; like it in all varieties of tone and colour and lustre and largeness ; awful sky ! gentle sky ! art thou more like my own ever-changing life, or like God's eternal purity and independence ? The sky dwarfs the earth as eternity dwarfs time ; it is a daily familiarity, yet a daily surprise ; not only does it display its own grandeur, it warms the earth into fruitfulness. My Lord, my God, my Saviour, make

my little life like a garden for beauty, like an orchard for fruitfulness !

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**“Alone, yet not alone, for the her is with me.”**—  
JOHN xvi. 32.

So devout was Christ, that the Lord's life was the Lord's prayer. Jesus walked with the Father—nay, he was with the Father, and might, therefore, truly say, “The Son of man, which is in heaven.” Christ's nearness to God was oftentimes most awe-inspiring. One might almost hear the living messages as they fell from the lips of Jehovah into the ear of Jesus. A few of Christ's prayers enrich the sacred page—such prayers ! What simplicity, yea, what reverence, yea, what earnestness, yea, what trust, mark these intercessions ! Devoutness is essential to a great life. Men may be physically great without being devout, but beyond such greatness they cannot rise without implicit, intelligent, reverential faith. Devoutness connects man directly with the Infinite. Devoutness takes men to that mountain whence they may obtain a clear view of “the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.” Devoutness is not synonymous with sentimentalism. Devoutness is as superior to cant as is the natural to the artificial flower. Devoutness is often too profound

for language ; its solemnity strikes it dumb. The shallow stream can babble without interruption, but the deep river often runs without faintest speech. When a man is afraid of solitude his character is tottering to its fall. May I be able to say, "Alone, yet not alone, for the Father is with me," then solitude will be the very sanctuary of the Lord. "Be still, and know that I am God," —mark that ; be still, be quiet, shut out all clamour ; make a highway in the silence for the descent of the Holy Ghost. Father, thou canst work this miracle,—thou canst build a sanctuary of silence even amid the violent storm.

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"And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put up for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar."—GEN. xxviii. 18.

There are single visions of God that convert the soul. From this moment Jacob began to be a new man. What if it be true that we can only see God once ? That vision is an eternal memory. Jacob did not become a mere contemplatist. We shall know whether we have truly seen God by the effect which the supposed vision has produced upon our character. If we are tenderer in heart, more generous in dis-

position, more forgiving in temper, we may conclude that we have seen God as it were face to face. If we are covetous, selfish, hard, peevish, and vain, then we may be assured that God was not in all the noisome smoke which we mistook for the veil of his glory. This test of our dreams will scatter a thousand illusions. Many a gilded haze will dissolve and leave the soul to be mocked by an unsuspected emptiness. When we are more godly, we may be sure we have seen God. When we burn with a holy passion for the salvation of men, we may know beyond all doubt that we have felt the power of the cross of Christ. The sight of God is not a superstition, it is a discipline. May my life be the interpretation of my best dreams. By doing much for men, may I show that I have been much with God. How am I to know a true dream ? How am I to escape dyspeptic religion ? By the spirit of service and by the spirit of sacrifice. Not, what have I dreamed ? but, what have I done ? is the question before which, as before a judgment-seat, I must try my life. God be with me to save me from despair !

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"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up."—JOHN iii. 14.

Here the names of Moses and the Lamb are brought into conjunction by Jesus Christ himself. No sign of inferiority is attached to Moses. There is nothing in the terms of the conjunction to denote inequality. Is Jesus Christ degraded by so remarkable an association? Ours is a poor reverence—in fact only a drivelling superstition—if we tremble lest Christ's honour be divided.

Was not the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness a Divine arrangement? Is not the apparent insignificance of the device quite consistent with God's method of doing his work? It was not the scheme of Moses; it was not the proposition of the suffering Israelites. It was the direct command of God, and therefore not unworthy of being spoken of in illustration of the great Redemption.

Is not every human attempt to recover and heal the world a movement in the direction of the Christian redemption? Men are not always aware of the full significance of their work. Every man who studies and toils that he may alleviate human suffering is moving in the line of Divine beneficence. He may not see all that he is doing; it may be an unconscious, and, in fact, an unintentional movement, yet not the less certain and not the less a basis of appeal to himself on higher concerns. God's argument with men regard-

ing the recovery and sanctification of their souls is strengthened and made logically irresistible by their own efforts in the lower region of healing and education and satisfaction. The great text now before us may be expanded so as to embrace all those efforts. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness; as physicians seek healing virtue in plants and minerals; as parents strain their affections and their outward resources for the advantage of their suffering children; as philanthropists make great efforts to better the state of society; as human life in its best condition is a continued attempt to raise and bless the world, even so is the lifting up of the Son of man the whole scheme of Divine mediation, the great, the transcendent expression of Divine Love, the all-inclusive and sublime consummation of all human processes; and if you did but understand your own care about the welfare of the world, you would see in it the sign of God's infinite love as shown in the lifting up of the Son of man.

In this union of the names of Moses and the Lamb we have a hint of the co-operation of the human and the Divine, which should help to an understanding of the great special work which is entirely of God, and cannot be shared by men. In all attempts to do good, though they be divinely

suggested, we are but working with broken faculties, and our sinfulness mars the beauty of our ideals; we cannot work with whole-heartedness and purity; we struggle and blunder; we become discouraged and weary—but God works from the other end. With infinite power, with infinite wisdom, infinite love, he answers the cry of the heart, and reveals the cross bearing his own Son, as the great end towards which we have been moving, but which of ourselves we could never have attained.

**"This Moses, whom they refused, the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer.... The stone which the builders refused the same is become the head stone of the corner."**

ACTS IV. 11.

When a man's enemies are they of his own household he has reached almost the last trial of his faith and patience. When David's equal, and guide, and acquaintance, with whom he took sweet counsel, and walked to the house of God in company, reproached him and magnified himself against him, David's heart failed, and he spake bitterly with his tongue. Jesus Christ came unto his own, and his own received him not; he was in the world, and the world was made by him, and

the world knew him not. No man received his testimony. He was a King of whom his citizens said, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Yet God hath set this stone of stumbling and this rock of offence as the Head of the corner, and on him the spiritual house is established for ever.

Very wonderful is God's method of electing and calling men to his service; so wonderful as to throw into confusion all human probabilities and calculations. He raiseth the poor out of the dust, and liftest up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. He destroys the wisdom of the wise, and brings to nothing the understanding of the prudent. He chooses base things of the world and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are. By the foolish things of the world he confounds the wise, and by the weak things of the world he confounds the things which are mighty. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes!

God's election fell not upon Eliab, but upon David, the keeper of sheep; he called Elisha from the plough, and set Amos the herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit to prophesy unto Israel. He makes the first last and the last first!

Men are confounded when their probabilities are upset, and when their inductions from what they mistake for facts are contradicted by unexpected events. Men talk about cause and effect; they say that the cause must be equal to the effect; they read life, and work in the light of theories which have a good deal to recommend them; yet God often baffles them—often calls the unlikeliest men to the front, often gives the race to the slow, and the battle to the weak, and gathers the whole kingdom of Heaven around a little child as its best earthly type and illustration. “This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.”

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**“The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”—JOHN i. 17.**

Here we have at once a parallel and a contrast—a parallel, in that law and grace are both of God, and a contrast, in that while law came by the servant, grace and truth came by the Son. Yet grace is not lawless, nor is truth an unregulated sentiment. We could never have known grace had we not first known law; nor could we, as sinful men, ever have come to the spirituality of truth, but through the definiteness and severity of commandment. In a very important sense we have to

begin with Moses, and to traverse the initial and preparatory stages of the Old Testament; the Old Testament and the New are yet to be to us as Moses and the Lamb. They are distinct, yet united; and as Jesus Christ himself began at Moses and all the prophets, and found in all the Scriptures things concerning Himself, so we may find in the ancient records of inspiration the law which, unchanging as the Lawgiver, is yet carried to fulness of grace and truth in the work of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

There is a difference between law and grace, and law and truth, which need not be pointed out at great length in this connection. It is enough to lay hold of the fact that in the working out of his purpose God sent a schoolmaster to conduct us through a severe yet invigorating discipline, that we might be prepared to enter upon the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Children can understand a command when they cannot understand the reason on which it is based; they can obey the law when they cannot explain the truth; they can walk by the letter when they cannot comprehend the spirit. Yet there comes a time in their growth, if they grow according to the Divine law, when, under the sternness of the commandment, they see the tender purpose of grace, and through the hardness of the letter

they see the brightness and beauty of truth. Jesus Christ, then, did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it; He did not depose Moses and the prophets, but gave them exceeding honour; He did not relax the law of the seasons, yet showed that in Himself alone came the bloom and splendour of eternal summer.

It is true, blessedly true, that we are not under the law, but under grace; and I deny that any man who is in grace can make light of law; on the contrary, he will see in law the first motion of the Divine love which culminated in the grace of Jesus Christ.

If any man is carrying the law as a burden, which prevents his coming to the Gospel, he is abusing the law; and if any man says that because he is under grace he can therefore dispense with the law, he is dishonouring grace. Being under grace, we are the servants of righteousness—we are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.

**"They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."—REV. xv. 3.**

Wonderful is the song of Moses and the Lamb—the song of the human and the Divine, the song of law perfected in grace, the song of earth and heaven. How

human nature is thereby glorified—apostate, ruined human nature associated with the Lamb in the song of heaven! Christianity, instead of depreciating human nature, exalts it; it is only in Christianity that we see the real worth of human nature. If a man would know what he really is, and what he may become, let him look, not at himself, but at Jesus Christ. Was not man made in the image and likeness of God? True, he is a fallen creature; yet in his fall he attests his origin, there is not a fragment of the shattered temple which does not prove that its builder and maker was God.

They are not two distinct songs, the song is one and the same. Nor is the Lamb dishonoured by being thus associated with the great representative of the human race; it is his own doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes! It is not the song of Peter and the Lamb, though Peter was the first Christian disciple; it is not the song of John and the Lamb, though John pointed out the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. It is the song of Moses and the Lamb. The Old Testament and the New are one, the law and the Gospel are one. From the beginning to the end the Divine dispensations are one. God's love, as shown in Jesus Christ, was not a merely chronological development. From eter-

nity to eternity God is love ; now thundering on the mount that burned with fire, now entreating upon Mount Zion ; now smiting the nations with the rod of destruction, and now sending the Gospel to every creature ; now commanding the pestilence to make havoc in the earth, and now causing the sun to arise with healing in his wings. God's love has many servants. Moses, Elias, and Jesus are to us separate names. Are they not, viewed from an earthly point, as faith, hope, and charity—all God's gifts ? Yet the last and best and greatest is Jesus.

We have seen Moses and the Lamb persecuted by kings, we have seen Moses and the Lamb refused of their brethren, we have seen Moses and the Lamb associated in lifting up the standard of salvation, we have seen Moses and the Lamb as representing the law and the Gospel, we have seen Moses and the Lamb as the subjects of heavenly song. From this conjunction let us learn at once how condescending is the majesty of God, and how majestic is the nature of man.

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**"Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee, go up and possess it."**—DEUT. i. 8.

Service has always been an energetic factor in the education

of the world. In the earliest history related in the Bible men were set to work. There is no talk of mere worship, or worship dissociated from active service. Religion and business, prayer and the earning of daily bread always go together, as it were, hand in hand, completing one another, and in various ways stimulating and encouraging one another. To pray well should be to work well ; and to work well is impossible unless we pray well. Moses said, "Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee, go up and possess it." The Lord made the garden, but he set Adam within it to dress and to keep the ground. The Lord does so much and man must do the rest. In this instance the Lord set the land before the people, but they themselves were to go up and possess it, they were to fight their way to it, they were to endure momentary inconveniences in the hope of obtaining it ; because there was a great land before them destined for their possession and cultivation they were to bear bravely the cloud and the storm and the difficulty of the passing time. This is the very spirit of the Gospel ; this, indeed, is the very spirit of Jesus Christ himself, for he endured the cross, despising the shame, being enabled to look forward to being set down at the right hand of the throne of God. If I think of earth only I soon

become stunted and dwarfed in every faculty, and my best aspirations are stifled, having no room to rise in, no bright sky to long for. But when I think of the world that is to come, with all its range and glory and rest and occupation, I am stirred in every energy, each pulse becomes at once a source and an expression of power, and my whole life is flooded with gladness which must betake itself to some form of occupation and beneficent service. Every man must fight his way to heaven. Blessed be God, he fights it in the grace of Christ and under the continual ministry of the Holy Ghost. The fight is not his, he but expresses a divine purpose, and so long as he is associated with a divine inspiration he cannot fail of victory. We should have less unhappiness if we had more work. The cure for dejection is self-sacrifice; the cure for complaining and grudging and discontent is to go out and work faithfully as the servant of the poor and the lost. Knowing the right, may I do it! I beseech thee, thou Saviour of souls, thou King of Glory, enable me to realise in actual life all that I feel in the depths of my spirit. I know how great must be the judgment that will fall upon those who know the right yet pursue the wrong, who having understanding of thy will obey only their own desires. This day thou

hast given me a new opportunity, an inviting field is before me, may I advance to it in thy strength. If it be a field to plough or sow or reap, thy will be done; or if it be a field on which a battle is to be fought, let thy banner over me be love, and let the almighty ness of God be the fountain of my strength. My poor prayer shall become a prevalent intercession in heaven because it is uttered in the name of the Son of man, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

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**‘Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.’—I SAM. vii. 15.**

Think of being able to account for all the days of a whole human history! Think of being able to write your biography in one sentence! Think of being able to do without parentheses, foot-notes, reservations, apologies, and self-vindications! When some of us attempt to write our biography, we have seen great blank spaces—we do not know what we did then; we have seen blurred, blotched pages, with erasures and interlineations, and we have said, “This reminds us of the daily and terrible mistakes of our life.” So our book becomes an anomalous, contradictory, irreconcilable thing. Here is a man whose

lifetime is garnered up in one sentence. I must be more definite and concentrated in my work; it is possible to be too diffuse and so to miss the truest and largest success. "This one thing I do." I will begin this very morning to gather my strength together and work more definitely for Christ. Lord, help me. Take not thy Holy Spirit from me. Keep me lest I fall into frivolity, and from frivolity into ruin.

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"When I awake, I am still with thee."—PSALM cxxxix. 18.

In another sense, indeed, had the Psalmist known it, he was still more truly with God when he was asleep. In all probability this was his meaning, for what he now says he says in a voice of wonder and thankfulness. In sleep we can do nothing for ourselves. It is well, inasmuch as it is instructive and spiritualising, that there should be hours in life when we are literally self-helpless. It seems as if, during some part of every day, God had committed us to a life of faith or trust. We may not put it thus religiously to our own minds, but even the atheist must enter the valley of the shadow of darkness which he called night in a spirit of trust. The Psalmist's expression constitutes a beautiful refrain

to the whole song of life. Morning, noon, and night the Christian should exclaim, "I am still with thee." For example, when the Christian passes through a season of peril in which all things seem to have been against him—when the very hills have been torn up by the roots, and every cloud has been as a face of anger, when the storm has carried itself away, the Christian pathetically exclaims, "I am still with thee." Or let it be a season of loss, in which the good man has lost health, friends, property, and all his earthly ambitions; yet still in that night of poverty and emptiness he is conscious of possessing the true riches, so long as he can say, looking upward into the dark heavens, "I am still with Thee." He who is with God cannot be lonely, cannot be poor, cannot be weak, cannot be hopeless.

"In the darkness of the night,  
In the thickest of the fight,  
When every friend is out of sight,  
I am still with thee."

"In the perils of the day,  
In the hardship of the way,  
Without human prop or stay,  
I am still with thee."

"In the agony of care,  
In the midnight of despair  
I claim the privilege of prayer,  
I am still with thee."

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**"I pray thee, let me go over  
and see the good land that is  
beyond Jordan, that goodly  
mountain, and Lebanon."**—  
DEUT. iii. 25.

Desires are not good simply because nature can be pleaded in their justification. Nature must be rebuked and educated until, by much chastening, it is fitted for the enjoyment of ultimate blessings. Even Moses becomes, in this natural desire, chargeable with impatience. It would seem as if he wished to have a special advantage for himself, and this God has ever been careful to regulate, and sometimes even to deny. Even Moses must not be too far separated from the people whom he leads. He might have a distant view of the land, but was not permitted to enter it. Moses was trying to build upon reason rather than upon faith. God will not allow himself to be thus dishonoured. The father desires to live long enough to see his sons well settled in business, the statesman is anxious to live until his policy is thoroughly tested and established, the reformer secretly prays that he may not be taken away until his reforms have been perfected; all these are natural desires, but at the very heart of them is the stain of selfishness. The children are not ours, they are God's; good policies are not human inventions,

but Divine suggestions; healthy reforms spring out of righteousness, which is at the core of the universe. Some of us would like one glimpse of heaven even whilst we are upon the earth. To overhear one tone of the upper music, to see but the outline of some love-remembered figure, to steal away out into the night and to detect in its cool winds one waft of heavenly fragrance—surely all this would inspire and strengthen and comfort us; but prayers of this quality indicate impatience, want of faith, and lack of meekness and of wisdom. Let us rest in the Lord and wait patiently for him. "He is in one mind and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth even that he doeth." It is even felt to be hard upon us that we cannot see the promised land. One look at it would establish our faith and enlarge our prayers; yet we must turn our heads downwards to the land of graves, where flowers bloom only that they may wither. Our want of vision is an infirmity, but an infirmity which time will destroy. If we cannot enter the land of promise, we can climb to the top of Pisgah. If we cannot have Canaan now, let us enjoy Pisgah. One hill will help us to another. Spiritual contemplation will help us to offer, with a steadier hand, the needful sacrifices of daily life.

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"They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing."—JOHN xxi. 3.

What a report to give of a man's work! Is there not a great lesson here for workers of all kinds? What was the report of these men? Two words—"night" and "nothing." And they were not to blame for it either. I wish to speak a word to those who are often doing their little best, and yet find, when they come to reckon up what they have been doing, that it comes to these two words, "night" and "nothing." Let us think about your case awhile. You did go forth, did you not, to work, to serve, to set yourself in co-operation with Almighty God? It might be in a little sphere in a humble way, but you had the intention to do right, and you went out to do it, and you have been labouring all the time, and it has come to "night" and "nothing." Do not be discouraged; do not be cast down; do not look at other people and say, "See what wonderful results have attended the ministry, the service, the labouring of such people as these." If you have been doing your work in a right spirit, perseveringly, devoutly, without self-sufficiency, continuously and hopefully, you have nothing to do with the results at all. When will people give over adding up?

What have ministers of the gospel to do with adding up? In proportion to the greatness, the scope, the grandeur and spirituality of work, is there nothing that can be added up. You must take care lest your arithmetic destroy your enthusiasm and quench your inspiration. What we have to do is to work as though everything depended upon us, and then to go away and cry mightily unto God as if we had no power at all. It is possible that in business, in the family, in the Church, in the Sunday-school, in the missionary field, "night" and "nothing" may sum up from the human side the results of labour. But let me pause, lest any dog should eat this bread, for not a crumb of this bread must be had by any living dog. If a man shall say, "That is my case—'night' and 'nothing'"—and I do not trouble about it; I shall live as I list; I shall put forth no effort; if anything shall come of this work, and this doing of things, well and good, but I shall not concern myself about it." Such a talker is an idler who has no right to eat a solitary crumb of this bread that cometh down from heaven—this encouragement to true labourers, this word, cheering, and helpful, and hopeful, which is intended only for men who do work, and who do pray, and yet who have only "night" and "nothing" as their apparent earthly reward.

**"But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore."**—JOHN xxi. 4.

"Morning" and "Jesus." Write a poem on these words—"Morning" and "Jesus." Or put the two words, and just see the rapid variations of human life—"night" and "nothing," "morning" and "Jesus." That is the Christian life, and in as far as we are vitally Christian do we enter into the mystery of these apparent contradictions. Meet a Christian man under certain circumstances, and you will see as it were upon his countenance, "night" and "nothing." You say, "How gloomy he is, and how much depressed! There is no spring in him, no tunefulness, no inspiration; only 'night' and 'nothing.'" See him the next day, or month, or year, and his countenance glows like the morning, and his voice is tuneful, and he brings with him an atmosphere pure, and vital and vitalising. That is Christian life—sometimes very low, but always in Christ and always on the rock. Dwell on these sweet and tuneful words a little longer. Look at them, because the eye will help the ear,—"When the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore." He had been on the shore all the night, if they had but known it. We poor navigators and fishermen are tossed upon the nightly deep, the dark sea

the troubled waters, and we cannot even see the shore; but it is our joy to believe that he who makes the morning is standing yonder, and that we shall see him by-and-by. What is this life of ours but a troubled lake, heaving and swelling and tossing, breaking into billows and dashing into foam, rising into storms, and occasionally falling into a beautiful calm! When our fishing is done, and we give it up, and want to get home, yonder the Saviour is standing on the shore and saying, "Children." Have you any Christ on your shore? Have you any hope that when your little fishing is done, and you have passed through "night" and caught "nothing," you will see him on the shore who makes the "morning"? It will be a poor, wretched life for you if there be not in the midst of it, and round about it, this inspiring hope, this sure abiding and transporting confidence. But with such assurance all life will be a growing joy, all sorrow a strengthening and ennobling sacrament, and death itself shall be welcomed as a transformed enemy doing the work of the triumphant Master.

**"I myself will awake early."**  
—PSALM cviii. 2.

The Psalmist says: "I myself will awake early." They awake

early who have great business to undertake, they awake early who anticipate the enjoyment of great pleasures, and they awake early who are waiting to answer the cry of pain or need. From these experiences we may learn that there is also a religious determination to awake early, that worship may sweeten the whole day and turn every cloud into gold. They who awake early see the beauties of nature in their freshest and tenderest aspects. Account for it as we may, the landscape is always most inviting in the morning light. It seems to have been waiting for us, expecting us, preparing for us, and is often as the very flower of heaven welcoming our feet to pass over the land of richness and restfulness. Only the sluggard lingers long in bed ; what the sluggard misses, who can tell ? And yet, because he is a sluggard, it is possible that he may miss nothing ; for not only is the sluggard the victim of bodily infirmity or weakness, but that weakness spreads a cloud over all the faculties of his mind, so that if heaven itself were opened, he would not know that there was above him a vision of God. We must bring ourselves into right discipline before we can enjoy either nature or life, either human history or Biblical revelation. The hearer must be prepared as well as the preacher. The more thoroughly the book is prepared,

the more thoroughly should he be prepared to read it who expects to gather its wealth, garnering its golden corn, and hearing all its minor and thrilling music. The very act of waking early is itself a discipline. The body would say, "Sleep on : a little more sleep, a little more slumber, a little more folding of the arms together." At that moment the struggle is between the body and the soul ; once let the soul conquer, and evermore the body will know that it is no longer master, but servant. We rebuke the man who gives only the remainder of his energies to things that are of high social importance ; how much more shall we rebuke him who brings to God only his weariness, his exhaustion, his utter impotence and irresponsiveness ? In all things the word is true which says, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase." First thoughts, first strength, first property, first honours, I would offer to my Saviour who died for me, and without whom I can do nothing. Grant, Lord, that in this conviction I may live and die !

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"In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul."—PSALM xciv. 19.

If the joy we have does not

touch and bless the soul it is not worth having. The soul is the self, the man, the very pulse of life. There are joys that please the senses, but do not reach the soul; money, fame, even health, are not the deepest joys. They have a place and a value which it would be folly to deny, yet they are but as shadows that abide not compared with the joy which drives the clouds from the soul, and shows the soul how great and bright is the thought of God. All our thoughts need not be what is generally known as religious—such as thoughts of family, of business, of history; yet if our love of God be chief, it will make all other thoughts sacred, and put them in their right place and on their right level. In this sense, as well as in others, the Lord will be the Lord of Hosts, ruling all the thoughts that urge their course through the paths of the mind, and saving the mind from being afraid of itself. We should take great care as to our chief thought. Let that be noble, pure, unselfish, and all the rest will be kept in check and made to serve good ends. Give me some good thought, O Father in heaven, this day, that I may think of the poor, the weak, the blind, the sad of heart. May I think first and most of thee. I cannot think aright of thee without caring for others, and caring most for those who care least for themselves. Thine is

the all-embracing kingdom. May I first seek it and thus secure all other things.

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**"Thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work."**—  
PSALM xcii. 4.

I look back upon all the way in which God has made me walk, and truly I must praise him for finding such a way for me. I did not see the way. I did not choose it. At first I thought it could not be God's way, the hills were so high, the rocks were so large, the path was so rough, and there was so much to make me afraid. Now I see much that God meant, and I am glad—glad with great joy. The work that lies before me this day is hard, and how to do it I know not. This is as the day of death to me. Yet this very night I shall come home with a new song in my mouth, and praise God with a loud voice, neither ashamed nor afraid that men should hear my giving of thanks. "Keep me this day without sin." Let my feet be kept on the right road, and my eyes fixed on the right end; then shall I do good to many, and the work of day shall be followed by sleep "like infants' slumbers, pure and light."

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**"Bring your sacrifices every morning."**—AMOS iv. 4.

We are to know nothing of obedience in the gross ; it is to be detailed, particularised, regular, and punctual. Is it not so with healthy eating and drinking ? with bodily cleanliness ? with physical culture ? Who would be satisfied with occasional obedience on the part of a soldier ? But only by obeying can we become obedient, as only by swimming can we swim. First experiences on a musical instrument are irritating and tedious, yet without them the instrument cannot be mastered. We cannot pray once for all. Nor can we pray by the calendar. We are to "pray without ceasing"—men are "always to pray, and not to faint." But this cannot be done at once. At first we hesitate and stammer and blunder. By repetition we create a habit. By coming to God with heart-offering every morning we soon come to feel the ingratititude of an omission, and the impossibility of repairing it. If we complain that we are always giving, we should remember that we are always receiving. Life is new every morning. Hope is new every morning. So is courage, so is strength ; so, therefore, ought to be love, and praise, and sacrifice. Lord, take me wholly into thine hand this day, and save me from supposing that yesterday's strength can

carry this day's cross, and that yesterday's prayer will save me this day's journey to thy mercy-seat. Christ, Son of God, Blessed One, make me better to-day than ever I was before—purer, simpler, wiser, kinder, and altogether more pleasing to thyself.

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**"Trouble and anguish hath taken hold of me : yet thy commandments are my delights."**  
—PSALM cxix. 143.

The Psalmist was accustomed to bring together strange words, so varied and conflicting was his personal experience in divine ways. He said, "Trouble and anguish hath taken hold of me : yet Thy commandments are my delights." Thus the Psalmist had a double experience. One would have thought that where he found trouble and anguish he could have found nothing else of a contrary quality. On the other hand, one would have supposed that where he was filled with delights trouble and anguish would have no part in the lot of his life. But where is the life that is not mixed, curiously inwrought with contradictory elements, marvellously compacted with things that are dissimilar ? We sing, even whilst our heart is sighing ; we triumph, even when the cloud is gathering for a great thunder-shower. Such conflicting experience is needful to the further-

ance and completion of human education. Life must not all go in one channel. Life is not one long summer day. In life, as in the year, there are four seasons, each differing from the other, yet each touching the other in some way, sustaining a curious and often inexplicable relation. Blessed is he who is conscious that his delights are more than his sorrows, and who knows that all things will work together for good if he but love God with his whole heart. My soul, I am this day conscious of sunshine and shadow, of joy and of trouble, hope and fear. My life is a struggle; my whole future often figures itself to me under the image of a tremendous conflict. They that be for me are more than all that can be against me, if so be my heart be hidden in Christ, kept by the Saviour of the world, sustained and fed by God the Holy Ghost. Let me not go down under the pressure of trouble; rather let me extract from trouble all spiritual inspiration and help, and fill my heart with holy confidence that shall banish self-conceit, self-trust, and every remnant of vanity; let my confidence be in the strength of God, and not in the sufficiency of my own power. This day I will fear no evil, for thou art with me: yea, though the day be as the valley of the shadow of death, what need I fear amid all the gloom if thy rod and thy staff comfort me? Again I

would say ere going forth to the battle of the day, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," and as for thine enemies, spiritual or carnal, invisible or palpable, hand them all over to the living God who will overrule all hostility and temptation to thy well-being. Oh, that this confidence may abide with me all the day, then I shall be strong in labour, and suffering shall but add to the perfectness and purity of my character. I depend upon Thee, thou Loving One, keep fast hold of mine hand; leave me not one moment to myself, but make me steadfast in thy counsel and strong in thy law.

**"I am not able to bear you alone."**—NUM. xi. 14.

On one memorable occasion Moses said, "I am not able to bear you alone." Every man must bear his own burden and fight his own battle. There are hours in life when there seems to be but one man in all the world, and all the world seems to be set against him in active or passive opposition. It is divine appointment that human power should be thus humbled and exhausted. I must think of Moses as a lonely worker, and as saying that even his great strength was limited. We soon come to the point of exhaustion. But human weakness

has its lessons. I learn from it something of the range and quality of divine power. When Moses succumbed—and no stronger man has appeared in the moral history of the ancient world—he was obliged to look to Almighty God for a renewal and continuance of his strength. Moses had a noble, shepherdly heart and an understanding radiant with wisdom, yet there came a point even in his experience when his strength and wisdom were unequal to this stupendous task. It is under lights of this kind that we see what Jesus Christ must have been. Never did the Saviour utter a corresponding cry of weakness. This is most important as suggesting an argument as to the difference between his character and the character of all his predecessors. I see here also a distinction of a very vivid kind drawn in personal life between law and grace. Law is a burden, grace is an inspiration. Love is infinitely stronger than duty. Moses directed the people as a legislator; Jesus fed his flock like a shepherd. He never asked for help, whereas we are always coming to the end of our poor little strength. Human wisdom says, I have no more answers. Human strength says, I have no more energy. Human patience says, I have no more endurance. It is when our greatest men complain of their burden and

service that we begin to see how great a Saviour was the Son of God who bore away the sins of the world. I will not look to Moses as my leader, but to Jesus Christ. He is omnipotent, not only in strength but in moral attributes—the true almighty, the infinite, everlasting energy. My Saviour, thou knowest when my work is too heavy for me to bear alone. Come to me in that hour of darkness and fear, and connect me with the springs of thine own strength. Thou didst tread the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with thee in the hour of agony. I cannot tread my winepress alone, nor need I fear that I shall be left to the solitude of despair. Come to me, and make me feel how near thou art to guide, sustain, and bring to completeness my faith and my peace. Lord, this day leave me not one moment to myself.

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**“Day unto day uttereth speech.”—PSALM xix. 2.**

He is a wise man who takes heed to the silent eloquence. What is it that day says unto day in the hearing of the Christian heart? Every day speaks of Providence—the hand that spreads the table, the light that indicates the path, the power that shapes events apparently confused and

uncontrollable into beauty and utility. In every day may be heard the voice of love—the voice which speaks comfort to the heart and gives assurance to the spirit that all the tumult of life is under Divine and beneficent control : nothing happens by chance ; nothing is done wantonly : everything, even including loss, pain, and chastisement, is intended to bring about an issue of love and peace and rest. Every day speaks to every other day of hope ; to-morrow is not to be so cloudy as to-day ; there is always a better time to dawn upon the world's unhappiness ; evermore is the Lord coming, some say personally, some say influentially ; some say he is ever coming, in providence, in unexpected events, in solemn changes. Whatever may be the critical or technical view to take of this movement, it is certain that every day dawns in all hopefulness upon the world, and bids the world awake to realise greater advantages and responsibilities than before. Blessed is he who every morning hears the speech of God's Holy Spirit to the heart and to the conscience. We may go forward this day confident that if we provide the listening ear God will provide the instructive and comforting speech. Let each say, " Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth ;" speak in thunder, or speak in whispers ; speak in events, or speak in spiritual

suggestions which the heart alone can hear : only speak to me, thou loving, tender Saviour, and give me a spirit of obedience that shall respond to all thy speech in active and willing service. This day I would hear better than ever I have heard before. Though the messages conveyed to me be such as summon me to harder duty, still would I listen to thee meekly and expectantly. If this day God will speak comfortably to my heart, then shall I receive his Gospel as an assurance that I am not forgotten, but that amid all the ministry of creation I am regarded as a child of God. Thus will I speak to myself on the authority of God's Holy Word, and thus will I go forth to duty with a brave and hopeful heart.

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"His banner over me was love."—CANT. ii. 4.

Even poetry as we know it is but poor prose when it tries to tell what God's love is. Think of our life being lived under a canopy of love more beautiful than the sky even in summer time ! Look at the sky in its fairest loveliness —how high, how wide, how pure, how full of grace and glory. It shall be more than sky to me ; it shall be a living smile, a face of love, a banner of triumph, anything and everything that brings God near, and gives me hope

beyond the line of Time. The text leads me to think of a feast under a love-flag. The wine is from above, the viands have been brought down from heaven, the fruits have been plucked from celestial trees, the all-protecting banner is held by the hands of angels. Can I partake of such a feast and be as ill-fed as if I had eaten sand in the desert? Can I rise from such a feast and sit down at the table of devils? Can I have access to God's table and yet fret myself about to-morrow? The poetry of the text thus becomes most practical, by bringing with it corresponding obligations, and making me feel that the guest of God should repay his Host with gratitude and obedience. He spreadeth a table for me in the presence of mine enemies. My cup runneth over. In my Father's house is bread enough and to spare. I will arise and go to my Father. I will say, "Father, Father, Father," until the very word becomes music in my ears. How many other sweet words are in the name of Father! Love is there, and Mother, and Home, and Rest. But I must not waste one side of the word, the side where the deep shadow lies like a silent storm. In the Bible I read, "As a father pitith," and in the same Bible I read, "as a father correcteth." Both "as a father" the quality is the same; the spirit is the same; the purpose

is the same. The smiting of God is the smiting of love. It was hard when the last light went out, when the babe died—that dear white lily withered; hard when the burial-bell sent its dull groan through the merry clang of the wedding-peal; oh, so hard, so hard—not to be borne indeed, but that an angel sang, "Like as a father." Then I saw the "banner," and on it I saw—"Love."

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"**M**y thoughts are not as your thoughts."—ISAIAH iv. 8.

The Lord himself says: "My thoughts are not as your thoughts . . . for, as the heaven is high above the earth, so are my thoughts than your thoughts." So the thoughts of God are both "deep" and "high." Man calls them "deep"; God calls them "high." If they are both deep and high, how can we expect to see all their meaning without thinking long and earnestly about them? Nor is this all. We may have to wait a long time before deep thoughts show just what is meant by them. They do not spring up in a night and die at the going down of the sun. The higher the star is, the longer is the light in coming down to us. But what star is so high as the thought of Him who made it? How good a thing it is to be able

quietly to wait! The thoughts of God come up from eternity, and to eternity they stretch! It may be that not until I enter the world of light shall I know all that God is doing to me and for me now. Then He will tell why the way was so long and hard; why I had to part with much I loved with all my love; why other men were rich and I was poor; why some seed never came to blade, or ear, or full corn in the ear. His thoughts are very deep, but His love is most tender; in thought I cannot follow Him, but His love shines and sings and comforts on every hand. I will cling to the love where I cannot understand the "thoughts."

**"His mercy endureth for ever."**—PSALM CXXXVI. 1.

When the Psalmist says, "O give thanks unto the Lord," he does not appeal to mere sentiment, nor does he ask men to be doing something that is of the nature of superstition; he immediately adds his reason for the exhortation—"for His mercy endureth for ever." The Psalmist would have human praise continue as long as Divine mercy, and because Divine mercy never ceased he would never allow the song of gratitude to come to an end. The Psalmist does not magnify the almighty-ness of God, or any of those attributes

which appal men and drive them from the throne to an immeasurable distance, covering them with a sense of inferiority and humiliation; he calls upon men to give thanks unto the Lord because of the Lord's ever-enduring mercy. We always need mercy, because we are always conscious of guilt. We appeal to mercy because we dare not appeal to righteousness. The innocent man appeals to the law, and defies all the consequences of the law, because he stands strong in the consciousness of his integrity; but the man who is not only outwardly accused of sin but inwardly convicted of it, and who is sure that he deserves wrath and condemnation, will hear the word "mercy" with hopefulness and joy; and if it be pointed out to him that mercy may be realised even in his case, he will cry with exceeding eagerness to heaven that the Divine mercy may be granted unto him. Mercy is not only seen in the pardon of sin, it is seen in the prevention of many distresses, and in the sanctification of all afflictions. We must not limit the word "mercy" to the meaning of the word "pity;" the one is by no means bounded by the other.

Mercy delights to give, delights to take the best aspect of every character, delights to increase the strength of the burden bearer or to diminish the weight of the burden itself; mercy suggests

reasons why justice should not demand the uttermost farthing ; mercy not only pities the sufferings of others but takes upon itself much of that suffering, bears it, sustains it, that others may suffer the less. Jesus Christ bare our sins in his own body on the tree ; he carried our sickness and our diseases ; he prevented us fainting because of hunger ; he saved us in our uttermost distress. Let us find mercy everywhere. Mercy is seen in the gift of light, and beauty, and music ; mercy is also seen in the kindling of the lamp of hope which casts a glory even upon the darkness of death and the grave. My song shall be of mercy and judgment. I will hear the Psalmist when he calls upon me to give thanks unto the Lord, for I can attest the reasonableness and the truthfulness of his argument. Lord God, do thou this day show me thy mercy ; guide me with thine eye, and let the defence of thine almighty-ness be round about me. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe. May I never trust to my own righteousness, because I have none ; but in the midst of my sin, and sorrow, and blinding tears, may I cry out for the mercy of the living God, as revealed in the living Saviour, God the Son. Amen.

“ It doth not yet appear what we shall be.”—I JOHN iii. 2.

Paul says that if we have hope in this life only, we are of all men most miserable. In some respects that is perhaps too remote and speculative a truth for us to lay hold upon in its entirety. We must find, not in dreams only, but in facts, a ladder, the foot of which shall be upon the earth, up which we may climb, little by little, until we see greater spaces and brighter lights. I think we have in our own daily life this very truth plainly and happily set forth. This, indeed, is the very genius of our life. I hope to be able to show that there is enough of progress and development in our present existence to justify the belief that man, living in God and loving him, shall pass on to capacities, services, and enjoyments, of which he can have now only the most imperfect conception. If we can establish the case within well-known limits, we shall be entitled to view the solemn future in the spirit of holy prophecy and hope. Look at the little child in his mother’s arms : its eyes beautiful, but vacant, or just sharpening into attention and wonder ; its hands a cluster of dimples ; its head at all points of the compass in five minutes. Now look at that man who, with eye of fire and voice of thunder, binds an army together, and rules

the will of a hundred thousand men with a word: the little, comely, helpless infant has grown into that mighty soldier, whose look is equal to a hundred swords, whose voice is equal to a cannonade. Who could have predicted such a man from such a child? Say, then, to every child, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be;" we must wait; we must live and work in the spirit of hope; this child, or that, may move the world to God and heaven!

Look at the child beginning his letters and forming words of one syllable. See him hesitating between C and G, not exactly knowing which is which, and being utterly confounded because he is not sure whether the word to should have two o's or one! Now look at the student shut up in the museum deciphering and arranging the most learned and difficult writings in all literature, vindicating his criticism in the face of an enlightened continent. The two are one. The little puzzled learner has grown into the accomplished and authoritative scholar. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be!" If we follow on to know the Lord and do his will, our strength shall be equal to our day, and we shall be to ourselves a continual surprise, and to the dignity of life a constant witness, and a memorial not to be gainsaid.

Here is something which a child might hold in his hand, and it is not half an ounce in weight; no man would give a farthing for it. Yonder is a great tree, broad, high, spreading far, and lodging many a bird in its hospitable branches. The two are one. What you saw first was an acorn; what you saw last was an oak. So may all other acorns say, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be!" we may yet grow into forests out of which shall be built the navies of the world.

Fancy a child born under the most corrupting and discouraging circumstances; parents immoral; poverty, desolation, discomfort of every kind, the characteristics of the house. No reverence, no chivalry, no pretence even of religious form; to be born under such circumstances is surely to be doomed to continual depravity, wickedness, and despair. Yet even there the Spirit of the Lord may mightily operate, and out of that pestilent chaos may order come, and music, and beautiful utilities. The dark mind may be penetrated, the leper may be cleansed, the valley may be exalted, and the crooked be made straight, and the prey be delivered from the terrible. This has been done; it is being done now; it is the daily Christian miracle; it constrains us by glad compulsion to exclaim, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be!"

It is the joy of the Christian missionary to be able to point to villages once the scene of cannibalism, and of wickedness of every name, where there was no conscience, no law, no mercy, no honour, and to show you houses of Christian prayer, and to point out men who were cannibals singing Christian psalms and crying like children under the pathos of Christian appeals. What wonder, then, if within view of transformations so vital and astounding, we exclaim with thankful and hopeful surprise, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be!"?

In the occasional displays of power on the part of gifted individuals, we see some of the supreme possibilities of human exaltation. In the great singer whose tones hold in blissful captivity the thronging multitude, hear the finest expression of your own hoarse, rude voice; for it is your voice; it is human, and in all things human you have rights and privileges; it is yourself refined and elevated—yourself redeemed and glorified. A few are trustees for the many. When Aristotle argues and Tully pleads, when Raphael paints and Milton sings, it is you, O poorest man, of uncelebrated or dishonoured name, it is *you*, realising your immortality, accepting your Divine sonship, holding higher than any "banner proud" right up in the eye of the

sun the charter of your celestial descent and infinite redemption.

I have heard the rocks talk thus. When they have seen parts of themselves taken away, and cunningly carved into poetry; when they have seen themselves built into majestic walls and lofty pillars, curved into arches and rounded into swelling domes, they have said, See what can be made of us! It doth not yet appear what we shall be! The hand of art can find an angel's face in the unshapen marble, and the eye of genius can see in the yet unblasted rocks minsters and abbeys that might make an atheist pray.

So the text has wide reaches and meanings. It points to new heavens and a new earth, to new humanities and new services, to death destroyed and the grave overthrown, to life upon life without sin or weariness, to day without night, to joy without satiety, and to knowledge without presumption. It is an upward way, a shining path, a flowery road; no lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up thereon, it shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The practical expression of so inspiring a faith is obvious. If you have this hope in you, you will set a high value on human life. You do not know what that

boy of yours may yet be. You are bound to take the highest and brightest view, and to work in that direction. Regard him in his merely animal capacity, and your work will be hardly worth doing ; but think of him as in germ a man, a citizen, a thinker, a Christian, a philosopher, a teacher, a leader, and your best sympathies, not your merely parental sensibilities, but your heart's truest concern, and your life's best labour, and your most earnest prayer, will converge upon every day of his existence. And under the inspiration of this hope your own troubles will come to have a new purpose and a blessed effect. The darkness of the present will be gilded by many a keen ray darted from the happy days that are yet to be, and that which is rugged and difficult now will be smoothed by your joyous forecast of an endless life. But if the future is to be blessed, the present must be well employed. In a deep sense, the present is the future. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." To-day is the seed which tomorrow you will have to cut down with the sickle !

Last night I saw a faint yellow light struggling with feeble timidity against some half-angry clouds ; they gathered against the light, as if determined to shut it out ; and the pale moon seemed too languid for resistance : but the

breeze came to her help ; the thickening clouds were broken, and the moon seemed to take heart ; brighter and brighter were her mild beams, until at last she stood up in the southern sky, the clouds all gone, like an angel watching from afar the flowers which the sun had just forsaken. So shall it be with our cloudy life, if we be God's children. The clouds are not permanent. They are but elevated shadows. The true light will pierce them, melt them, scatter them, and we shall stand out distinct as stars, higher than ever cloud ascended, renewed in lustre by the infinite glory of God.

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"It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises to thy name, O most High."—PSALM xcii. 1.

It is a good thing to go out of one's self—to think high thoughts—to feel how small we are in the midst of all the worlds, and yet how great we are in the love and care of God. This is how we can get rid of all that would thrust us down and make us feel the weight and shame of sin, in such a way as to quench the light of hope. Sweet Christ of God, I would think of thee in the hour when the day dawns, and have thee think of me whilst all the hours call men to work and care,

to stoop down to earth for bread, and meet all the stress of life's hard fight. Dawn upon me, O Light of the soul; then I will sing to thee as one who has no fear, but is rich in joy. Think of others also—of the sick and the poor, the blind and those who have lost their way; and if I can help any poor soul this day, let me do it, for thy sake. The earth is very cold and sad and lonesome for many who dare not tell all their grief.

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"The sea is his, for he made it."—PSALM xcv. 5.

The fulness of the sea is God's. How the sea can roar, and how the mountains can shake with the swelling thereof! How desolate it is, and how monotonous, even when the sun turns it into gleaming silver! Yet it is God's sea, cared for, stored with riches, and needful to the balance and fruitfulness of the earth. The sovereignty of the sea is ascribed to God by all Biblical writers in terms worthy of the adoring ascription: "The Lord caused the sea to go back;" "The sea is his, for he made it;" "he divideth the sea;" "he gave the sea his decree;" he dried up the sea of Babylon and stopped the springing of her wells; then upon Babylon he brought back the sea and covered her with the

multitude of the waves thereof. We must not, then, think of the sea as God-forsaken, or suppose that God regardeth only the dry land. Lord, look upon all travellers on the great and wide sea, and cheer their souls with sweet hope of reunion when the flood is past; hear thy people when they pray "for those in peril on the sea;" pity those who are in great fear and send them help from the sanctuary; and may they who are waiting for the home-coming of travellers be made glad by the fulfilment of their desire. Father, the sea is thine; no wave can destroy if thou wilt undertake for me; yea, the sea shall be as the dry land if thou dost so will it. Thou canst make glad the solitariness of the sea, and fill the sullen winds with odours as from heaven. We can only go over the sea; we cannot abide there, or build upon it, or set upon its great billows any permanent memorial. How quickly are our tracks washed out as an intrusion never to be permitted! In the sea we leave our dead without stone or epitaph, yet they are in God's good hands—they are in God's acre. O thou who art Lord of sea and land, keep until the resurrection morn those whom we leave in the deep or in the flowery sward. May they awake in thy likeness, and may we who have loved one another here renew our fellowship in the glory-

land where there is no more sea  
—night no more—storm no longer.

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“Whatsoever a man soweth,  
that shall he also reap.”—  
GAL. vi. 7.

The harvest morning reminds me of the morning of seedtime. The two mornings in fact cannot be dissociated. The harvest is nothing but the seedtime in another form. Solemn are the words: “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” We acknowledge the reasonableness of this law in nature and in the general practice of life,—why should we ignore its application to spiritual education and results? He that soweth to the flesh should of the flesh reap corruption; he that soweth to the spirit should of the spirit reap life everlasting. This great law of seedtime and harvest has been observed by wise men in all ages. Said Job, “Even as I have seen, they that plough iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same.” The wise man in his proverbs has made record of the same great fact—“He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity.” The prophet Hosea has followed with his testimony, saying with poetic beauty and force—“They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind.” The Apostle

Paul is also a witness testifying strongly to the same reality—“It ye live in the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live.” The harvest will be lost upon me if I fail to make these moral applications. This is not going out of my way to find lessons, it is simply reading the open book of nature, wherein God testifies to the continuity and inexorableness of law. He who soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every day gives an opportunity for the sowing of seed. This day I may sow the seed of good words, kind actions, helpful services: above all I may sow the seed of a good example. A man does not always know what seed he is sowing, or in what quantity or what quality he is scattering upon society. The harvest will be a revelation to the sower. He will wonder that he sowed so much, or he may be amazed that he has sown so little. Let us avail ourselves of the sunshine; let us remember that the morning is the time to go forth and labour, and that eventide is the hour of rest. In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand; for thou knowest not which shall prosper, or whether both shall be alike good. Father of mercies, wherein I have sown bad seed, do thou

send a blight upon it that it may never come forth to fruition ; wherein I have sown good seed do thou grant the rain and the breeze and the sunshine, and all that kind ministry of nature and of grace to bring that seed to a perfect harvest. I know thy law ; fill me with thy spirit that I may do it all, not reluctantly but with loving obedience.

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**"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people."**—  
PSALM CXXV. 2.

Parts of the Bible could not have been written but for the high places of the earth. Ascending almost pathless mountains, who can help exclaiming, "The strength of the hills is his also ! " ? Surrounded by hill upon hill, each higher than the other, and all constituting a sanctuary of solitude, the heart cannot but thrill under the recollection that "as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people." We image the constancy of the divine covenant and the unchangeableness of divine love by "the everlasting hills ;" needing special comfort and grace, we almost involuntarily cry out, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills whence cometh my help." My Lord and my God, my soul's eternal Saviour, I bless thee for the hills of frankincense and the

mountains of myrrh, for the cleft of the rock, and the chambers not made with hands. This is not solitude, it is closer love ; it is a place of vision. Now I can see afar, yea, I can see my coming Lord ; "the voice of my beloved ! behold he cometh leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills." In my faith I would be steadfast as the mountains, and in my service as fruitful as the valleys ; in my hope I would be as the hill-tops which catch the earliest light ; in my convictions concerning the cross I would be as the immovable hills. Lord, help me herein ! Lord, take me into a mountain apart, and talk with me until my heart be all aglow with love !

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**"Bring him unto me."**—  
MARK ix. 19.

A distracted parent had brought his son, possessed with a dumb spirit, to the disciples, that they might cure him. Their efforts were abortive. A great multitude had congregated round the disciples. Christ, on approaching, inquired the reason of the tumult, and was answered, "Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit ; and wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him : and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away : and I spake to thy

disciples that they should cast him out ; and they could not." This was a crisis in the history of miracles. I can imagine the half-triumphant feelings of the scribes and Pharisees as they witnessed the scene. Would Christ's successful career now be brought to a melancholy close ? Had the Victor confronted an enemy of overwhelming strength ? Would his proud banner be torn into rags by an exultant foe ? We have but a moment in which to indulge such interrogatories, for the Saviour interrupts with, " O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you ? how long shall I suffer you ? bring him unto me ." Could words be more kingly ? The man who talks thus must be conscious of irresistible power,—to use such words before the cure was to subject himself to the cries of indignant scorn and execration in the event of defeat. This was the moment on which untold results were suspended : the dumb spirit apparently defied the Healer, for when the sufferer was brought into the presence of Jesus, " the spirit tare him ; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." Look at the scene ! In the sufferer you have a representation of a terrible chaos, and in Christ the Creator of light and order ; Christ speaks but once—" Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him."

That one " charge " was enough : the demon that defied innumerable physicians, that had scorned the incantations of soothsayers, and even laughed at the name of Christ as that name was pronounced by faithless lips, could hold sovereignty no longer when the Majesty of all spirits bade him relinquish throne and sceptre. Thus did Christ conquer. He tore up the mountain of difficulty by the roots, and scattered it to the winds ; over this mournful chaos he breathed the word which brings light and beauty, order and music.

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**"A servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God."**—ROM. i. 1.

To-day I am to stand before the people as an ambassador of Christ. The thought overpowers me. I have to go through a decorous routine in order to try to save souls ! I have to be conventionally respectable that I may be the means of saving men from hell ! Thus, thy ministry, O Crucified One, is degraded into an art, an etiquette, an iron-bound programme. Were I to cry out and shout because fair visions of God are making celestial morning in my soul I should be frowned upon, reproved, sneered at, and talked about as a fanatic. Were

I to say that the vision of God has been withheld from me and therefore I must be dumb, there would be a complaint that would impugn God much more than it could impugn me. To-day I must say what the people say, or I shall become unpopular. When the people hear their own opinions proclaimed with energy they are profited and encouraged, but when their fallacies are exposed and torn to pieces they mourn the overthrow and destruction of their idols. What, then, is the minister's refuge, and what his consolation? He must build himself upon his Master, even upon the Christ of God, and seek no smile but from heaven. This will be hard work in the process but the end will be sweeter than honey, yea, sweeter than the honeycomb. Income will have to suffer, old associations will have to be destroyed, selfishness must be nailed to the cross, for out of all this revolution alone can peace come—peace real, deep, enduring. The minister's lot is very hard, for whilst it would be his delight to utter all the message of Christ, he is encumbered and hindered by many human conditions, and not least by the subtle influences that weave their damning spell around his selfishness, his vanity, and his ambition. How tremendous are the assaults of the enemy upon the ambassador of Christ! They cannot be put into words; they are felt as

poison is felt, in all its quiet, insidious, deadly power. And amidst them all the minister must preach almost as if he stood within the very gate of heaven. Often the relief of open confession is denied him, because he knows that confession would be perverted or misunderstood by suspicious minds, and even if its immediate effects should not be harmful, it might be long remembered and used to gratify a resentful temper. Yet why, my poor soul, dost thou ponder such things or allow them to darken life's varied outlook? Always think of the Master, and say to thyself, "It is enough for the servant that he be as his Lord" yea, it should be the joy of the servant that he can put his lips to the Master's cup. I have suffered nothing yet for Christ. Suffering would be a badge of merit. Suffering would assure me of a crown. Lord, may not even I be fearless and self-forgetful in this holy ministry? But that I may rebuke well, may I live well: that I may deliver thy judgments may I tarry long at the Cross of my Lord. Saviour, be near me, and all will be well.

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"This one thing I do."—  
PHILIP. iii. 13.

The preacher has no competitor. He is not a speaking author, or an author who reads

his own compositions in public ; he is not a writer of sentences having a religious flavour ; he is not the publisher of a Sunday review, or a general critic who could not live but for the special advantage of a public holiday once a week : he is a regenerated man, speaking words which have been prepared for him, passing them through the fire of his own experience, and staking upon them everything sacred to the present and to the future ; he is a speaker ; he utters from the heart. In exposition he is one man, in exhortation he is another ; in entreaty he addresses himself to a side of human nature to which no other man can so directly and successfully appeal. The preacher has a word to say which he did not invent, and which he cannot modify ; he speaks in the Master's presence and he speaks the Master's word. Such a man has, in this department of his manifold work, no competitor and no rival. So long as human nature rises against itself in angry accusation on account of its own aggravated and shameful sin ; so long as avenging justice follows and smites every vice of the life ; so long as disappointment stings, and sorrow opens the fountains of tears ; so long as little children die, and fond associations are rudely rent ; —till the last prodigal is home, till the last prayer is answered, till the last battle is fought and

won,—so long will Christian preachers be wanted ; so long will the balm of Gilead be called for ; so long will the Cross be the mystery and the hope of life ; and so long will be needed men of faith and power, men sanctified by the Holy Ghost, men having the spirit of judgment and the spirit of burning, men who count it renown beyond all other fame to be “but ministers.”

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**“Utterly destroy them.”—  
DEUT. vii. 2.**

This is a command repeatedly given to the children of Israel. We read such words as—“Thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth, but thou shalt utterly destroy them”—again, “Leave none remaining but utterly destroy all that breathe, as the Lord God of Israel commanded.” Probably no words occur more frequently than the words of the text. With their local meaning we have now nothing to do, but their moral application extends to all periods and conditions of time. Apply it for example to all bad habits ; to all wicked companionships ; to all unholy purposes ; to the whole plan of life which is stretched with a view to selfish gratification. What is to be done under such circumstances ? So long as we think of mitigation, careful treatment **so as not to wound**

susceptibilities, compromise, or connivance, we can make no progress in the holy contest. The watchword must be not only destruction but utter destruction, destruction twice over, destruction about which there can be no mistake, because every root has been turned up, and every quivering limb has been cut off, and absolute ruin has been inflicted. Many are prepared to improve a little, or even to adopt considerable reforms, or carefully to cleanse every public aspect of life; but this is not the law of the Bible, and must never be mistaken for it. Where the tree is bad the axe must be laid to the root. "Ye must be born again." The Spirit of the living God must take full possession of the heart and transform everything into its own quality. There is a strong temptation to stifle the voice of conviction when personal comfort depends upon silence. There is also a strong inducement to open communications with wicked men who can facilitate or in any way assist us in the business of life. The law is plain: "Thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor with their gods;" take heed to this, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee. We cannot escape on the ground that this is an Old Testament injunction, for the same principle is repeated

in the apostolic writings:—"Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" All history shows that where the destruction has been only partial divine judgment has overtaken the disobedient. Notably study the case of Saul, who spared the oxen and the sheep. If we will not utterly destroy evil we shall be utterly destroyed ourselves. "He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy." So thorough is to be the work of destruction that even places and things inanimate in any way connected with wicked designs and practices are to be obliterated or destroyed: "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess serve their gods," etc. (Deut. xii. 2). The reforming king beat down the altars that were at the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, and he beat down the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron. The work was completely done. "He brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men" (2 Kings xxiii. 12-14). With historical instances like these for guidance we can

have no doubt as to their moral applications. The evil spirit is to be deposed, cast out, and prevented re-entering the heart by the guardian fire of the divine presence.

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**"A thousand generations."**—

DEUT. vii. 9.

It is interesting to mark God's processes of education. This expression was about as much upon the doctrine of immortality as the Israelites could bear. The word immortality would have been novel and unintelligible: but God often gives the meaning without giving the irritating or bewildering word. The text would open up a marvellous vista to the imagination. This is always educationally inspiring. Discontentment sets in when imagination can no longer carry on its process of creation. The text will show that human life is not a little game which can be precisely measured as to duration, and estimated as to value; but that it is mysterious in continuance, and incalculable as to range and influence. If life could have been measured with certainty, it could have been, in various ways, discounted and foreclosed. From a Bible point of view this is impossible. When we have accustomed the mind to the idea of a thousand generations it becomes

comparatively easy to receive the next idea, which we know now under the name of immortality. Even time may be so used as to become solemn in suggestion as to duration and issue. The passing day is measurable, but the days are without number. So we have plainness and mystery associated from the very indication of the periods of time.—Jesus Christ will come with the great explanation, changing all our ideas of time, making one day as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, and leading us to understand the sublime mystery that God sitteth upon the circle of eternity.—We may be driven by experience into the acceptance of doctrines from which unaided reason shrinks as much in fear as in unbelief.

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**If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them?"**—DEUT. vii. 17.

A very likely process of reasoning. But likely processes may be snares to us, and as such should excite our suspicion. Whenever the Bible contradicts that which is supposed to be palpably obvious we may be sure that the circumstances are not so simple as we had foolishly supposed. All religious calculation should have a religious issue; that is to say, we

should not have secular considerations at one end and religious considerations at the other. If we are going to fight in our own strength, it is right that we should count the number of our antagonists; but if we are going to the battle in a representative capacity, we should estimate the forces that are behind us, and then advance to conflict singing "God is our refuge and strength," "if God be for us, who can be against us?" Our faith should rise into praise, or it is but perverted and enfeebled reason. What applied to Israel in the matter of human antagonists applies to us in the matter of spiritual foes. We do not fight such enemies in our own strength. They are not our enemies first, it is because they are first God's enemies that they are ours when our heart is inclined towards goodness. In all spiritual difficulties we should find refuge in spiritual history. "I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old," "Be not ye afraid of them: remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses." If we begin to reckon up the enemies which are arrayed against us in life we may well lose all courage and hope. The enemy is at every turn in life. The very air would seem to be charged with temptations. Society is consti-

tuted upon the very principle of mutual temptation. Self-indulgence, immediate pleasure, the gratification of friends, the necessities of custom, the snares of fashion, the allurements of wealth; all these beckon us or force us in the wrong direction. Truly their name is legion. We may well ask, "How can I disposses them?" The question will bring its own answer—"Thou shalt not be afraid of them, but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did." It must not be forgotten that when the good man is defeated, God himself is overthrown. "The battle is not yours, but God's." Bid every man hope in Heaven. Exhort every man to look away from his own resources, for it is undoubtedly true that the devil is intellectually stronger than man, and is inspired by an energy which can utterly exhaust human strength. Man needs to be continually encouraged in upward ways. God himself condescends not only to instruct him, but to encourage him. "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

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"But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea."—DEUT. i. 40.

Here God gives the murmuring

people their own way. Surely they will now be satisfied. It is one thing for us to utter a request, and another for God to grant it. We do not know what our prayer is until God says to us in effect, Take your own way, and let it be even as ye have spoken. Our murmurings are measured by our own littleness, but when God takes them up and pronounces them according to the scale of his own being, we are overwhelmed by the very consent which we once despaired of obtaining. Could a grass blade complain of the earth, and desire to be free from the bondage of the root, no severer punishment could be inflicted upon it than to grant its desire. Release from the root would be destruction. The so-called liberty would soon prove itself to be extinction. What was the answer of the people when God practically gave them their own way? They answered and said, "We have sinned against the Lord; we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us." Good determinations may come too late. Enthusiasm of this kind is based upon mere feeling, and is destitute of the durability of conviction and reason. Men cannot leap thus suddenly from dejection to exultancy. As the dejection was ill-reasoned, so the exultancy is without solid basis and intelligent justification. Men must sub-

mit to a period of probation after they have dishonoured God by complaint and distrust. God is not to be trifled with by sudden and transient assertions of loyalty. Seeing that such consequences depend upon the battle which he is waging in the world, he must try every soldier and prove his courage and steadfastness; otherwise when the army was routed God himself would be mocked. What did the people do, when they had girded on every man his weapons of war? Notwithstanding the divine assurance that God was not with them, they "went presumptuously up into the hill." This showed that they were not self-controlled. Their impulses were stronger than their understanding, and they were blinded by their self-conceit. What can an army do in the absence of its God? The answer is: "The Amorites came out against you, and chased you as bees do, and destroyed you." So good impulse is not enough. The kingdom of heaven is founded upon law and reason. Human impetuosity cannot make up for divine absence. The vital question is whether God is with us, and to that question there need be no hesitating reply, for every man has the witness in himself. Consider the consequences had Israel succeeded in this fight. They would have practically deposed God. Atheism must always be humiliated and

discomfited. The sovereignty of the wicked is but for a moment; in the midst of their exultation and festival their lamps shall be blown out. Israel returned and wept before the Lord. Tears may

come too late. Tears may be signs of weakness rather than signs of penitence. God distinguishes the quality of tears. He responds to weeping hearts rather than to weeping eyes.

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